WHEN FOOLS RUSH IN

WILLIAM RICHARD HEREFORD

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Eleanor knelt gracefully

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By

WILLIAM RICHARD HEREFORD

Author of THE DEMAGOG

ILLUSTRATED BY

GEORGE O. BAKER

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To

M. L. L.

When you lived in the Rue de Tournon and I lived in the Rue Rosa Bonheur we dreamed a good deal about a play that should be of brave knights and gentle ladies with never a villain in the lot! Perhaps because of this lack—unworthy thought! —nothing then came of our dream except pleasant toil and a companionship that made Paris dearer to us both but, later, upon it was builded the present story which I beg leave to dedicate to you in memory of *le bon vieux temps*.

William Richard Hereford.

2136454

ANTE SCRIPTUM

IT IS NECESSARY FOR YOU TO READ THIS THAT YOU MAY PROPERLY MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF YOUR AUTHOR

How the attached manuscript came into my hands for editing and how it happens that it is now given to the world, containing, as it does, so much that is intimate and personal, are matters easy of explanation. Its very revelations, indeed, have induced its publication, for it has been not only my own wish but the desire of those whom the story more closely concerns that the world should know Florimond de Saint-Sauveur as he was.

During a long residence in Europe I was honored with his friendship. He was the last direct representative of one of the oldest and most distinguished families of France and inherited from his father, Prince Pierre de Saint-Sauveur, member of the French Academy, a passion for books, particularly those relating to philosophy and science.

By one of those curious anomalies that are often enough met with but never fail to surprise, Prince Florimond de Saint-Sauveur combined with this devotion to mental and moral science and this passion for ancient authors a strong tendency to pure romance. All his friends were aware of this romantic quality in his character and I am convinced that he, too, was fully cognizant of it, but he seemed to regard it as a weakness and kept it, as he fondly imagined, quite well hidden.

The accompanying pages are apparently written with a view to their publication but I have not the slightest idea they were ever really so intended,

any more than it was their author's original intention in writing the history of others to disclose his own. At first, it may be, he contemplated writing a romance of love that might some day be read by any one, but he made the amateur's natural mistake of basing his story upon actual happenings in the lives of those he knew. Throughout the narrative fact and fiction are curiously blended and the reader will not fail to observe with, perhaps, a sympathetic smile, how, in spite of his best intentions, the author, starting out as an observer of his friends, with the avowed purpose of remaining in the background, draws nearer and nearer to his own story. I fancy, indeed, the reader—if he be fond of literary analysis, and who of us is not?—will find his appreciation tickled time and again as he watches the development of this revelation. One can almost see the author fighting against this obtrusion of his own personality but when, at last, the satisfaction of communing with himself on paper masters him, he yields unreservedly, and without apology, devotes himself to his memoirs. It is then that you see deep into the heart of this most human student of books.

In the original manuscript, which came into my hands through the friendship of which I have spoken, the effort to subordinate the philosopher to the romancer is very apparent. Passages and entire pages of psychological and metaphysical speculation are suppressed, and though the temptation has been great to restore and reproduce these often valuable essays, I have respected the author's evi-

dent desire and excluded them from his story, in order that the romance might run on, as he wished it, freely, directly and simply with nothing to distract the reader's interest. He wrote in English, an accomplishment of which he was amusingly proud. I think he regarded his proficiency in that language as, in some manner, a tribute to his mother, who was an American, and whose memory he worshiped. It is, indeed, not unlikely that he undertook the present work in English as a mark of filial devotion. Beyond correcting a few natural mistakes in orthography and eliminating certain purely personal passages I have made no changes in the manuscript, preferring to leave as they are, occasional quaint turnings of phrases that demonstrate, despite his fond conceit, the author's lack of habit in expressing himself in the language he so dutifully employs.

Paris, July, 1912. W. R. H.

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CHAPTER I

IN WHICH THE GOOD GASPARD, ACTING AS PROLOGUE, RELATES A STORY THAT HAS ITS BEARING UPON THE PRESENT ROMANCE

THE last thing one settles in writing a book, observes the sage Pascal, is what one should put in first. Indeed, this is most true in my own case, for, now that I have set my hand to the chronicling of events which so deeply concerned good friends of mine and in which I was privileged to have a small part, I find it no easy matter to make a beginning.

Swiftly shifting scenes, filled with variety and unsuspected significance, crowd upon my memory but, in truth, I know not which one to

choose from among them and say definitely, as if I were a showman and you the waiting audience: "Silence. The stage is set. The wooden hammer of Molière is heard behind the curtain and here the drama begins."

Strange is it that my thought, which has had so much to do with more sedate subjects, should now clothe itself in the picturesque costume of the theater, finding its easiest expression in the simile of the stage. But, since it falls naturally, so be it, and for a beginning, we shall fancy ourselves in a playhouse with the curtain just going up, and after the manner of dramatists, classic and modern, those shall first appear who are of least importance.

Enter then, my faithful servant, Gaspard Crampon. He makes his bow, with long *favoris* whitening the sides of his face like patches of snow upon a leafless tree; the years have bent his shoulders that were once so strong and straight, but there is a brilliance of eye that age can not dim, and beneath his livery

beats a heart that never has been, and never could be, aught but loyal and tender. Yes, it is the good Gaspard who shall act as Prologue and introduce to your distinguished attention another one of minor importance, myself. By means of a true tale he shall account for my present occupation as a writer of romance, as the showman who bows before you, to keep to our metaphor. Once every year, upon the anniversary of my honored father's death, Gaspard repeats it to me as a sweet and solemn ceremony. Here is the story:

"When I went with my good master's lamented father to that far land of America I was not much more than a boy but I was chosen for the hazardous journey because I had been his servant ever since I was in the cradle, and because, in good faith, there was not in all Touraine a man or boy stronger of limb than I. My master was as brave as a lion and adventurous to the point of recklessness. His mind was filled with the exciting romances of

Monsieur Fenimore Cooper which he would read to me by the hour until, in my dreams, I saw nothing but the strange men with red skins and my imagination was aflame with the prospect of encountering them.

"But hardly had we arrived in New York when your father's eyes beheld her of whose beauty all the world, it seemed, did nothing but talk. And soon thereafter he met her and then all the Indians and the Far West of Monsieur Fenimore Cooper were straightway forgotten. Ah, Frenchmen are no laggards in love and you may be sure your father lost no time in declaring himself to the lady whose charms held him as if spellbound, but suitors were many for the hand of the beautiful Miss Schuyler, and she gave your father neither yea nor nay, and he was well-nigh distracted.

"It was at the great ball given to the young English prince who came so long afterward to the throne. He, too, was making a journey to America and royal honors were paid to him

wherever he went, honors consistent with his high rank for some day he would be a king. All the beauty and fashion of the new world were at the ball and the young Prince of Wales looked on, but he did not dance nor did it appear that he intended to, until he asked suddenly: 'Who is that beautiful girl there, standing by the window? She is the most beautiful lady I have ever seen.'

"The young prince took from a vase a red rose, and walking to where the lady stood, made a low bow. 'This,' he said, 'is the red rose of Lancaster. May I ask you to wear it? And may I have the honor of this dance with the fairest of America's daughters?'

"Now it so fell that a moment before she had promised this dance to your father, and she was placed in the embarrassment of offending her suitor, or of being guilty of the unpardonable rudeness of slighting one who was her country's honored guest. She glanced quickly at your father who, seeing her difficulty, smiled

with perfect understanding, and bowing ever so slightly, so that no other could see, mutely released her from the promise she had given.

"Then it was that this beautiful lady, speaking so that those about her might hear, made reply: 'Your Highness honors me above my poor deserts, and the pleasure of Your Highness' favor is made doubly great if I may take the liberty of presenting my future husband, the Prince de Saint-Sauveur.'

"Your father went hot and cold for that was the first time your mother had let him know that he was her accepted suitor. Ah, it is as your father said, it is the way with the American ladies. They are won not lightly. They hold themselves like a star in the heavens above a man's gaze and then, just when he who worships begins to think the star is too far away ever to be attained by mortal desire, the heavens bend down to him and show him paradise near at hand."

It is thus that Gaspard finishes the tale and

then we go together to my room and place fresh red roses in a deep silver vase that is one of my most cherished possessions. On one side of the vase are the arms of the house of Lancaster with a ducal coronet above them and on the other, in relief, is a rose like the red rose that was offered to my mother by the Prince of Wales, who sent her this vase when she was married.

Now that Gaspard has spoken the Prologue, do you wonder that I should esteem the Anglo-Saxon as my brother, or that I should write and speak the wonderful English language as if it were my own native tongue, or that I should find pleasure in presenting to you this drama? But now that this much has been explained I must withdraw from the center of the stage which I feel already I have held too long. Pardon me, I shall not offend again. I shall not obscure this dramatic history of others with my own reminiscences for that would be only to confuse, and I would have it

all presented in a clear straightforward manner. As the wise Marquis de Vauvenargues wrote so long ago, clearness is the good faith of philosophers, and that, I hold, is true of all who write.

I shall show to you a scene whereon the actors are men and women of gentle bearing and honorable demeanor, all save one, a creature who, I tell you frankly, I despise and who would not be permitted to appear before you did not the events necessitate. But he shall not be allowed to hold your attention too long, upstart that he is. Presently, upon the scene will come a noble gentleman, my friend, and a lady whose great worth my poor skill shall not be able to make you appreciate. And you shall see two who walk hand in hand, with faces illumined by the glory of exalted ambition, a young man and a maiden, wandering in Elysian fields; you shall behold the dangers in their path; you shall observe how others, older and possessing less of their divine fire of

genius, sought to make puppets of them, and the drama will reveal what resulted from their honorably intentioned meddling. Yes, it shall be all of that.

From time to time upon the stage you may see me appear, keeping, I promise you, in the background, and acting as a Greek chorus in interpreting the thoughts, or deeds, of the principals. And I shall cause it all to appear before you as if I were always there and saw it all with my own eyes, but, my faith, you will quickly discover that such could not have been the case. Some of the things I did see and some of the things I did hear and others I learned of long time afterward, and some again, I neither saw nor heard but, none the less, knew were true through that strange power the poorest of us may possess to put ourselves now and again in the places of those we love.

In all that is essential the record shall be true enough, though I shall be no dull copyist

of conversation, no mere chronicler of act and phrase. Ah, no; whoever you may be I know you well enough to make sure that you will require of me more art than that. The time shall be ever the present, the running moment that escapes our grasp and slips into the unalterable past, and the place shall be Paris, the lovable and lovely. Yes, it shall all be of Paris and, *Dieu merci*, of Love and Youth!

CHAPTER II

THE VICOMTE DE VOLNEY IS EARLY ABROAD UPON A PLEASANT MISSION

AS Yves-Bertrand, Vicomte de Volney, walked blithely through the flowering, fragrant gardens of the Luxembourg on that sparkling May morning, the little birds were singing in his heart. Swinging through the park with his long stride, he made a brave figure in his riding breeches and tight riding coat; a pleasing picture to look upon, for Bertrand de Volney was a handsome, stalwart, dashing fellow, with clear eyes as brown as a polished hazelnut, or as brown as his beard which he wore à la Léopold.

Truly those he passed, workmen in blue blouses late to their daily task, artists with paint-boxes and canvases under their arms on their way to a favored corner overlooking the

sunken garden, models hastening to an early appointment in some near-by studio, nurse-maids with gay bonnets watching, none too closely, romping, laughing little children as bright as the sunshine in which they played — any of these whom you may see on a summer morning in the Luxembourg might have heard the song in Bertrand de Volney's heart, or they might have seen that it was there, for eyes and lips must dance when the heart sings.

Two models who passed him looked up into his face, and smiling, whispered to each other. "*Ah, voilà!* One who has the music in his soul on this fine morning! Didst thou see the smile upon his lips and the *muguet* in his buttonhole? Lucky is the woman who can bring that look into a man's face!"

There is a time in the existence of every young girl when the Book of Life is interesting only when the page tells of love, and these two were arrived at that delightful hour. They

turned and stood gazing at De Volney as he walked on.

"Ah!" sighed one of them. "Without a doubt he goes to the home of his beloved, for his steps are eager."

"No," answered the other. "Did I not tell thee to regard the May flower in his coat? The *muguet*, as thou knowest, must be bestowed by the hand of love that it may work its greatest happiness. He comes now directly from her who gave it to him, and that is why the music is in his heart."

"Yes, thou art right, Margot; and I should not mind being the one who pinned the *muguet* on his breast. Thou canst well believe that she is happy."

But the Vicomte Bertrand de Volney was not in love. The simple suggestion would have made him laugh. True, he was good-looking, he was rich and he was thirty-five, and the spray of *muguet* had been placed in his

coat that very morning by no other than the most beautiful Madame Leslie Pointer. But Bertrand de Volney in love! You do not know his father, the old Comte Roger de Volney, who is, I think, the finest gentleman in all France. I have known the Comte de Volney ever since I was born, and I knew, too, his beautiful young wife, Bertrand's mother, who died when Bertrand was a baby. The count was never the same after that crushing blow and so it was that, from the time he was old enough to understand, Bertrand grew up bearing in his heart his father's sad lesson that love is a great joy we may not know without suffering. It is the law of compensation. Bertrand all his life was schooled against passion, so that at thirty-five he was an accomplished man of the world whose philosophy was that of the Stoics, in so far that he had been taught constantly to subordinate his emotions to reason, and to practise virtue, not as the Epicureans did, that happiness might follow, but for its

own sake because it is right. He was not cold, no; but — how shall I say? — he was so very reasonable. Bertrand de Volney in love! The idea was enough to make laughter.

No, the music that was in the Vicomte de Volney's heart on that May morning was not the singing of any woman's voice. It was the knowledge that what he was about to do would give pleasure to a friend who was very dear to him. And, mark you, there is no surer way to have the little birds sing in your soul than to bring happiness to another.

De Volney turned from the park, and following the broad Rue du Luxembourg into the Rue d'Assas, entered a building whose heavy carved doors stood wide open as if they meant to invite the world inside. Madame Guillou, the wife of the concierge, who, in all these years of Paris, had never left off wearing her Breton bonnet, looked up from her task of polishing the glistening oak floor.

"*Ah, bonjour, Monsieur le Vicomte,*" she

greeted De Volney heartily. "*Monsieur va bien?*" Only she pronounced it "ben," as she had done when she was a slip of a girl in Quimper.

De Volney touched his hat with his riding crop. "Very well, indeed, thank you, Madame Guillou; and how is the good Monsieur Guillou this fine May morning?"

Madame Guillou bent over her work, and if it had not been so dark in the hall I think one might have seen something like a blush come into the plump old cheeks.

"Ah, me, he will never learn wisdom," she confessed, with a shake of her head and a subdued chuckle. "Here we are, two old people, married for thirty years come Saint Eustache's day, but he is still the boy, Monsieur. He has gone out now to get for me — what does monsieur think? A spray of *muguet*, even such as Monsieur le Vicomte is himself wearing, I observe. Never a year has he missed giving me my *porte-bonheur* on the first

day of May. Truly he will never grow sensible."

De Volney laughed. "Bravo for the good Monsieur Guillou; and permit me, Madame, to express also my wish that you may have all the good luck possible." He bowed formally as if he had been addressing a duchess, and Madame Guillou made a little curtsy.

"Monsieur le Vicomte is in search of his friend, Monsieur Converse?"

"Yes. Is he in his studio?"

"He is sure to be there, and at work on such a bright morning. He works always, Monsieur Converse."

"*Merci*," flung back the Vicomte de Volney from half-way up the first flight of stairs, and Madame Guillou, resting from her labors, followed him with her eyes, musing that some affair of importance must be impelling the viscount, who was always so leisurely and dignified, to run up the steps as if he were eighteen instead of thirty-five.

It was five long flights up to the atelier of Mr. Bruce Converse, but the stairs were not of the steepness of ladders such as they are in the houses that have been built in Paris since the Empire fell. They were broad and easy to ascend, and Bertrand de Volney, who exercised every day at riding or fencing or tennis or footing, was not so much as out of breath when he knocked at the studio door.

"Come in," shouted Mr. Converse, but no sooner was the door open and Bertrand had shown his brown beard inside, than other voices greeted him.

"Oh, it's 'Is 'Ighness!" exclaimed young Mr. Sammy Potts.

"Welcome, Your 'Ighness, to our 'umble 'ome!" echoed two other young gentlemen, Mr. Amos Tuttle and Mr. Johnny Judd.

They were three most curious young gentlemen such as in the Latin Quarter are called "types," but they were very amusing and all three worshiped their friend, Mr. Bruce Con-

verse, as art students are fond of worshiping some painter a little older than themselves who has, as we say, "arrived." Just to look at them made one laugh. A modern and modish philosopher has ascribed our amusement at the peculiarities of others to the fact that they are in a manner merely exaggerations of our own failings. Perhaps it is true. It may be you and I have a secret longing we dare not gratify to clothe ourselves in an outlandish fashion that will cause us to be remarked, and so we laugh when we see Mr. Sammy Potts or Mr. Amos Tuttle or Mr. Johnny Judd strolling along the streets with wide velvet berets on the sides of their heads, their legs like balloons in enormous corduroy trousers, flowing black ties knotted loosely about their necks, wearing little coats that always seem too small, and on their feet,— Zeus guard us — sandals.

If I may borrow the expression of a friend of mine, they were "afflicted with too much Trilby." They had most strange ideas which

they had got, I am quite sure, from reading over and over Mr. Du Maurier's charming story about Little Billee and Trilby and the weird Mr. Svengali. You may see always in Paris, in the Latin Quarter, very young gentlemen from America or England who are "afflicted with too much Trilby," but you must not make the mistake of despising them, or even considering that they are extraordinarily foolish to wear their droll costumes. They have very sound hearts and very sound bodies under their strange clothes, and if their youthful conception of an artist's life is extravagantly romantic, after all, *c'est un beau rêve de jeunesse,* and none of us is so rich in fulfilled ambitions that he can afford to scoff at any dream of youth.

Mr. Sammy Potts, Mr. Amos Tuttle and Mr. Johnny Judd now surrounded the Vicomte de Volney and inspected his riding costume as if they had never seen such a thing before and as if it were every bit as strange as their own.

After all, why was it not? The three and De Volney were good friends. He had won their lasting affection when, early in their Latin Quarter experience, he had renamed them Velasquez, Rembrandt and Rubens. They had retaliated by calling the Vicomte de Volney ' 'Is 'Ighness ' because he was the first gentleman of title they had met. It was an absurd name and it teased my friend Bertrand not a little, for many of his friends took to calling him " 'Is 'Ighness," until Bertrand wished he had not been so quick to give names to the young Americans. He realized, however, that they were only returning his own game.

De Volney made a noble attempt to ignore the young scapegraces as they looked him over from head to foot, for great was their joy whenever they were able to disturb the viscount's poise. Converse stood aside, his pipe in his mouth, watching them with undisguised amusement.

" I have some news for you, Converse," as-

serted De Volney calmly, affecting to disregard the others.

"My word," drawled Mr. Amos Tuttle, "just see who's here."

"He must ride very well; he has such beyoo-ti-ful clothes," chimed in Mr. Johnny Judd.

Bertrand gave up the useless attempt to take no notice of them. With his riding whip as a sword, he placed himself on guard.

"Come on, you three little musketeers from Trilby," he cried. "To the rescue, Converse, I am surrounded."

CHAPTER III

A LIVELY ENCOUNTER THAT HAS AN UNEXPECTED WITNESS

FOR answer Bruce Converse put out a long arm, and his strong hand encircled the neck of one of De Volney's tormentors.

"Roughhouse!" cried the young gentleman, who found himself held in a grip of steel. It was a word that, I must warn you, you will not find in any dictionary, for I have searched for it; but it has been explained to me, and though I attempt the definition with diffidence, it is enough to say that the phrase is associated invariably with physical exertion often approximating to violence, and these athletic young gentlemen, who, with the exuberance of good health and youth were fond of trying conclusions of strength, had adopted it as a

fraternal slogan. True to the oath they had taken always to help each other, the two others responded to the call like knights of old. Bruce Converse, who was a veritable giant for strength, and who was as fond as they were of trying out these friendly tests of muscle — fonder perhaps — received them as they came. The battle was short. For a confusing moment or two arms and legs were flying about the studio — De Volney afterward told me Bruce Converse was like a charging windmill — and then two of the young gentlemen were on the floor with Mr. Converse in his painter's apron sitting on top of them, while the third was in a corner declaring loudly he had been placed *hors de combat* by a sprained thumb.

Mr. Converse calmly held his two squirming victims on the floor and looked up at De Volney, smiling. "I think we can talk quietly now. They are about ready to promise to be good."

He made a handsome picture as he sat there,

a young Colossus astride the wriggling forms of his captives. So sure was he of his mastery of them, so confident in his prodigious strength, that upon his flushed smiling face there was a look of the young gladiator, or of the warrior of ancient Gaul.

"We'll be good," came weakly from the two on the floor. Exhausted, they had ceased to struggle.

Now the Vicomte Bertrand de Volney, though, indeed, he had brought about the present conflict, was unable to take an active part in it for the rules and the manner of playing this vigorous pastime of "rough-house" were beyond his comprehension. It is like the magnificent English sport, *la boxe*, which the gentlemen of France, try as they will, can never master. It is in the race, I think, and Frenchmen, though they admire exercise and athletics can not bring themselves to the *corps-à-corps*, where one man must lay violent hands upon another. We pre-

fer fencing where the steel alone may touch. But Bertrand regarded the battle silently and impartially, his whole being delighting in the young artist's strength and his facile mastery of his three antagonists.

"I could not help you, my dear Converse," he said when the victory was won. "But I thank you and I congratulate you. I hope sincerely that you have not hurt the Messieurs Rubens, Rembrandt and Velasquez. And now I may tell you the news I have brought."

Converse raised his eyes from his victims and De Volney saw a sudden wave of crimson, more vivid than the flush produced by exertion, run over his face. There was no mistaking it, it was a blush, and quickly Bertrand followed the artist's gaze. In the open doorway stood a young girl; her blue eyes were alight with a boyish pleasure in the scene of battle before her; delight animated her face and in her expression, unhidden, was a frank pride that was almost proprietary.

"Splendid, Bruce!" she cried enthusiastically as her glance met the artist's. "Splendid! Magnificent!" Her outstretched hands went together in a spontaneous gesture of applause. They were quite remarkable hands, full of character and expression, slender, firm, of structural delicacy but strong, the fingers long but not round or tapering, not of Botticellian perfection, but graceful and fine. One saw at a glance they were the hands of an artist and that, without the premeditation of their owner, they would fall naturally into harmonious and expressive gestures. Something about them, too, was boyish, masculine, like the girl's good-humored smile.

"Heavens! Eleanor, I hope you haven't been standing there long," exclaimed Converse.

"Not half long enough," she laughed. "*Bonjour, Vicomte,*" she saluted Bertrand with a graceful wave of the hand.

A wail came from the two young gentlemen

on the floor. "Please make him stop, Miss Moore," pleaded Mr. Sammy Potts. "He is one to only two of us, the brute. Please call him off. He will do anything for you."

The crimson wave that had ebbed now suddenly surged anew to the very temples of the young giant. "That for your impudence!" he laughed, shaking the two of them. "What shall we do with them, Eleanor?" he asked.

"You mean, shall it be death or banishment?" the girl questioned.

"Mercy, fair judge; oh, beautiful judge, be merciful," pleaded the incorrigible Mr. Sammy Potts.

"Which do you prefer, death or banishment?" demanded Eleanor. It could be seen that she was accustomed to the pranks of the three young gentlemen. As a matter of fact they were her mute worshipers. All three of them fed their hearts on the unconfessed secret of their admiration for her. Not one of them but believed that he was hopelessly in love.

"Really, Miss Moore," put in De Volney, "it should not be less than death. If only you could devise for them some new and refined torture!"

"Mercy!" groaned the offenders in unison.

De Volney was inexorable. "I beg you not to listen to them," he argued. "Their offenses are numerous and most serious. I will be the public accuser. Offense number one: They have, as you know, repeatedly referred to me as 'Is 'Ighness. That is nothing less than treason and deserves death. Offense number two: they have dared to ridicule the costume I now wear. I ask you, is it not eminently respectable? Is it not even beautiful? Such an offense merits the torture."

About the corners of Miss Moore's mouth, a smile played. "Have they really dared?" she asked.

"I assure you, Mademoiselle, it is true," Bertrand answered solemnly.

"Innocent!" came a voice from the floor.

"No; I know you," she asserted. "You have come here to torment the good Vicomte de Volney, and to interrupt the work of Mr. Bruce Converse, painter. You have disturbed the entire house. When I came up the stairs every tenant was out on the landing. You have frightened my poor Aunt Ella. She thought the house was being bombarded!"

"Innocent! Mercy!" begged the culprits.

"Pronounce the sentence, Eleanor," urged Converse who had not relaxed his grip on his victims. "Whatever you decree shall be done."

Eleanor's mobile face assumed a judicial severity. "Will you boys promise to allow your friend, who is a painter and who works for his living, to carry on his labors in peace?"

"We promise," loudly assented all three.

"Will you promise not to molest the good Vicomte de Volney?"

"We'll be gentle with 'Is 'Ighness," prom-

ised one for all. I think it must have been Mr. Sammy Potts who spoke.

"Will you solemnly declare you will never again frighten the life out of my poor aunt?"

"Never again."

"Then let them up, Bruce, and I will pronounce sentence."

Converse rose, stretching himself as one does after a good morning's exercise. The two young gentlemen got to their feet stiffly, rubbing themselves a good deal. "Now face your judge," commanded the artist.

> "'Oh, how delightful,
> Oh, how entrancing,'"

sang that incorrigible Mr. Sammy Potts as the three formed a line like soldiers before the young girl. She raised a slender hand and pronounced the single word:

"Banishment!"

There were groans from the three offenders.

Eleanor's judicial severity relaxed. "Banishment," she continued, "to my apartment below while I get some coffee for you, for the chances are you boys haven't yet had your breakfasts. You really need some one to look after you. And while I am making your coffee, you can be making your peace with Aunt Ella."

"Oh, joy!" they cried and probably would have gone dancing about the room, had not a gesture from Miss Moore stopped them.

"Now, then, off with you," she ordered. "And I shall go, too, and leave Bruce to his work. You really should be ashamed to waste his time with your nonsense. When you have had your coffee, you must take yourselves off, for I have my own work to do which your pitched battle up here interrupted." But the three were not there to hear this last reproach. They had already gone, noisily scampering

down the stairs. Eleanor turned to follow them, but at the door she paused.

"Bruce," she exclaimed, "you were simply superb! I would not have missed it for anything. I wish I had a picture of it." The vivid color again leaped into Mr. Converse's face, but if Eleanor observed it, she gave no sign. She threw back a glance at De Volney.

"Good-by, Your 'Ighness," she smiled as she closed the door.

CHAPTER IV

A BRILLIANT PAINTER, WHO IS HARD UP, LEARNS OF A WEALTHY PATRONESS, BUT WITH UNHEARD-OF AUDACITY MAKES OBJECTION TO RECEIVING HER AID

IT was with a careful minuteness that Bertrand de Volney regarded the face of his friend, Bruce Converse. He observed the little bright lights that were as fires in the artist's blue eyes; he saw the look of great happiness upon the features. Converse went and stood before an open north door of the studio that gave upon a wide balcony overlooking the Luxembourg. Bertrand observed how his eyes seemed to drink in the spring-time freshness of the trees.

"Ah, De Volney! 'The year's at the spring,'" he quoted, nor did the note of buoyant joy in his voice escape Bertrand.

When Converse turned again to the studio, he seated himself before his easel, picked up his brushes and palette, and as he resumed work, whistled softly to himself strains from *Aida*.

Now whistling is an Anglo-Saxon accomplishment rarely possessed, or employed, by the French. "When an American whistles," De Volney reflected, "he is either worried or happy. My friend Converse does not seem to be worried."

"Are you so happy that you whistle?" he asked aloud.

"Aye, that I am; *mais oui*," Converse answered, without looking up. "Who would not be on such a day as this?"

De Volney was silent. Presently he spoke again. "You are not greatly curious to hear the news I bring?"

Converse leaped to his feet. "My dear fellow, forgive me. I had forgotten. I was thinking — I — I —" he stammered, confused,

concluding lamely: "Those foolish boys quite put it out of my head. What is it?"

"I am afraid it may not be so very important, after all," De Volney replied, still regarding him critically. "I am here so early this morning because I wished to be the first to congratulate you. Yes, I wished to be the first to tell you that your picture in the salon has been sold."

Bruce Converse's expression of surprise and pleasure showed how welcome was the news De Volney had brought. "Important!" he cried. "You know better than any one else, De Volney, how very important it is to me. You know all that it means to me to sell this picture now. And it was like you to come over here to tell me about it; quite like you, my friend." He shook De Volney's hand so hard that, if Bertrand had not possessed a strong grasp of his own and seasoned muscles, I think he must have found the proceeding

painful. He diverted the current of the artist's gratitude with a question.

"You are not anxious to know who it is that has bought it?"

Converse smiled. "My dear De Volney, the great thing is that it is sold. Why try to conceal the fact that I need the money; that I am *à sec*, as you say."

"And you are not curious, even if the purchaser be a lady?"

"A lady!"

"And a most charming one, *parole d'honneur*, one of your compatriots who, I have the great honor to say, is a friend of mine, Madame Leslie Pointer."

Converse echoed her name. The lady was well-known to him by reputation as, indeed, she was to nearly all of that contingent known as the American colony in Paris. She was a lady of great wealth, a widow, young still and most beautiful, who, possessing a generous

heart, had liberally aided those many charities which the Americans and English inaugurate in France. But the announcement that Madame Pointer was the purchaser had an unexpected effect upon Bruce Converse. Plainly he showed his perturbation. His nature was not one that could easily conceal, so he turned now to his friend and spoke out that which burdened his mind.

"You are a good friend, De Volney. I wish to thank you," he began hesitatingly.

"It has been nothing," the other interposed.

Mr. Converse went on, waving aside the disclaimer. "It is because you are my friend, my good friend, thinking always of some way to exhibit that friendship, that my conscience now is not at rest."

The Vicomte de Volney was perplexed. There was something in the attitude of this tall young man, standing so straight beside him with clear eyes fixed searchingly upon his

own, that assumed the significance of a warning.

"It's just this," Converse continued. "I know my pictures are not of the kind that sell."

"Did not the government of France buy one of your pictures for its gallery in the Luxembourg?" interrupted De Volney.

"Yes, and you, yourself, and others of my friends, most of whom I have met through you, have paid out their money for my work, but that is all. The critics, too, write nice enough things about my pictures, but, De Volney, I do not deceive myself; there are few persons who really like what I do."

"My dear fellow, the painters are enthusiastic—"

But Bruce Converse waved his remark aside. "Painters can see what I am after; they can see what I wish to do. They may differ with me or not, but they can understand it. I am not talking about them, but of the people who buy pictures. There's no use denying it. I

know it, my friend, and you know it. Such people do not want the work of a man who is trying to break away from old methods. They want something that is more like the pictures to which they have grown accustomed." The thought brought a line of bitterness about his lips. "It's hard enough to keep on doing a thing in the way one believes is right when no one wants it, no one cares. I beg your pardon, my friend," he added quickly when De Volney raised a gloved hand in protest — "almost no one. I do not count in what I have been saying men like yourself and Prince Florimond de Saint-Sauveur"— he was good enough to mention my name, De Volney told me —"although your encouragement and your faith have meant more to me than I can ever express. But it alone is not enough. I can not go on forever with just the faith of one or two devoted friends who buy my pictures, or get those they know to buy, out of charity to help a poor devil along."

The Vicomte de Volney took his time about replying. The surest way to confirm a pessimistic mood is to argue violently against it. "My dear Converse," he assured his friend slowly, "what you say is not new; we have talked of it before. Your experience is but that of every worker in every line of art, who, striving for that which his conscience tells him is right, sees himself passed over, his work neglected by the thousands who do not see with his eyes. The conscience of a good artist is as strict as the conscience of a good woman. Do you suppose that good women, when they see men, their husbands sometimes, allured by other women they know to be bad, do not suffer temptation?"

Converse gloomily assented. "Of course, of course; there is not much room for argument about it. I am not complaining about not being understood; it isn't that; I hope I shall never flee to that refuge for the incompetent. But what was on my conscience was

the fear —" He hesitated, and the viscount waited for him to conclude the phrase. "Hang it, De Volney," he blurted out, "I do not wish to seem ungrateful, but, knowing as I do that these pictures of mine do not appeal to many persons, I can't help feeling it was you, my good friend, who induced Mrs. Pointer to buy. You know how beastly hard up I am. You know I've come pretty near the end of my string and the sale of this picture means a lot to me, but I can't accept it. You have done too much already, and it isn't fair to you and it isn't fair to me and it isn't fair — no, it isn't fair to her."

Bertrand stroked his brown beard thoughtfully. "Ho, ho! So it is that?" He laid a hand affectionately on the arm of the young painter. "You do not know this lady. If you did you would not believe she would let herself be led so blindly. Must I tell you what she, herself, said? And have I not already done so? But no, I will tell it all to you, on

my honor as a gentleman. I had spoken to her of you; I had said that you were my friend. Yes, I had said that much, but I shall tell you what happened. When we entered the room where your painting is, she went through the crowd straight to it.

"'See,' she said as I followed her, 'there is something that brings real sunshine into the room.' I said not a word, and she stood before your painting for a long time without speaking. At last she said: 'It is the most beautiful picture I have ever seen.' Then it was that I spoke. 'Madame, you are looking upon the painting of my friend,' and I was very proud. That is all. She did not answer, but when the chattering, pushing, inquisitive crowd of *vernissage* day swept us into another room, she said: 'Have we not seen enough of pictures for one day?' And when we were out upon the street again, she said: 'I wish that he were also a friend of mine.' 'Madame, he will be most honored,' I assured her. My

friend, you will pardon me that I spoke for you. It could not be otherwise. Then, as we rode in the Bois this morning, she told me she had bought your picture and was very happy, and even as she spoke, she stopped her horse suddenly, and with her riding whip, pointed to some trees, glistening in the fresh sunshine.

"'See,' she said, 'those are your friend's trees. They are green and cool and living like that in his picture!' I did not —"

"Where were you?" It was the first interruption Mr. Converse had made. He had been standing looking out upon the waving tops of the trees in the Luxembourg gardens, and the expression of doubt and perplexity had slowly faded from his face, as De Volney had proceeded, until now there was in his eyes a new look of confidence, of hope and resolve.

"We were, I recall, beyond the Cascades. We had just turned into a shaded *allée* to our left."

Mr. Converse nodded his head. "She was

quite right," he said eagerly. "It was there I painted the picture."

The viscount smiled within his beard. "Then am I forgiven," he questioned, "that I have made bold to invite the lady here to tea this very afternoon?"

There was an expression of panic upon the face of Mr. Bruce Converse as he exclaimed: "Tea! Here! In this barn of a place!"

"She desires very earnestly to see my friend's studio as well as to meet my friend," De Volney explained in a quite imperturbable way.

"She'll be disappointed." Converse glanced apprehensively about the large workroom littered with canvases, some barren of paint, books, papers and small art objects scattered about in apparently hopeless confusion.

"I do not think so." De Volney had a quiet way of expressing his convictions that carried weight.

"Besides, there's nothing here to have tea

with — no cups, no saucers, no tea," Converse objected.

"Pardon me, my friend, if I have taken the liberty to think of that also. They can be provided. I should not like to disappoint this lady. She is so very interested in this work of yours which you think only a few can understand." He smiled a little ironically.

The expression of opposition departed suddenly from Mr. Converse's face and the newly inspired confidence in himself returned. "All right, it can be done," he exclaimed. "Yes, I am more than glad, and again, my friend, grateful to you. I shall get Eleanor — Miss Moore — to arrange it. She can make the place presentable. Yes, Eleanor can carry the thing through perfectly."

Now if I had been there I think I should have observed the smile lurking under Bertrand's beard swiftly disappear and a look of anxiety leap into his eyes. Eleanor Moore! He had not counted on her! But he was

too accustomed to schooling his emotions to allow his countenance to betray his thoughts.

"Miss Moore?" he questioned, but quickly added: "Yes, that will be quite charming; yes, yes, entirely so."

CHAPTER V

ELEANOR

CONFESSION is never made easier by postponement, and since this is a truth established by the experience of the youngest of us, I suppose it may as well be confessed now as later that the Vicomte Bertrand de Volney looked upon Miss Eleanor Moore as a most real and imminent danger to the career of his friend, Mr. Bruce Converse. It would have seemed strange past understanding to regard such a sweet and simple creature as a danger to any one, did you not already know of the schooling Bertrand had received from his learned old father, and most firmly he held to the dogma — you may argue about it if you will — that an artist in any field of endeavor must consecrate to that art the first inspiring

hours of manhood or womanhood. Love is a flower that, plucked too soon, may wither, and the breast that guards that flower when newly gathered must shelter no other.

If I had but twenty spring-times the less, I should tell you of Eleanor Moore in a way that would the better make you see her, or — I might not dare to tell you of her at all if I had twenty spring-times the less! For sometimes when I have thought of her, or when I have beheld her, and felt the sympathetic human appeal of her beauty, romantic thoughts have upset all philosophy in my brain, and often between my eyes and the book I read, the work of some dry scholar dead long ago, there have come such visions that I have gone to stand before my glass that I might take timely note of the fact that my hair is gray at the sides and distressingly thin on top; and recalling this, I have said to myself: "Florimond de Saint-Sauveur, whatever may happen to you, whatever little disappointed griefs you

may have in your own heart unknown to any one else in the world, whatever dreams may come into your romantic head, you will never, never, never be an old fool. You will never, never make yourself believe that, at fifty, your ancient image can fill the wonderful mirror of a young girl's heart!"

No, no, I merely look on at the comedies I see played about me every day, and I do not aspire to a great part. If it may be that sometimes when I see the comedy becoming too serious I may have the privilege of preventing it from turning into tragedy, I am content. That, I think, is my mission in life: to watch the plays that others act, and sometimes to applaud, and now and then to give a word of advice to the actors which they may accept, or not, as they consider wise.

So I may tell you of Eleanor Moore calmly. Make for yourself, then, of the colorless words I give you, the portrait of a young girl rather tall, inclined to slenderness, a something boy-

ish in the figure and in the frank gaze resting upon you from eyes as deep blue and luminous as an August star-filled night; eyebrows dark and slightly arched that cast blue shadows when the eyelids close; a wide mouth well acquainted with friendly laughter; lips red and soft, the under one a long full curve, the upper thinner and forming a delicious bow; the nose straight and delicately modeled; cheeks of creamy whiteness; a low forehead above which hair almost black waves, giving here and there a glint of burnt sienna such as one sees in polished mahogany. Picture such a head set upon the column of a rounded slender neck that gives it a poise of womanly dignity, and you have a portrait of Eleanor Moore, such as a photographer might make of her. But how can I describe to you what a painter would put in the picture? He would show the lips smiling in good fellowship, with, perhaps, the straight white teeth just visible as if the smile were about to broaden into a

laugh, for often that was her expression; and he would paint the deep blue eyes aglow with kindly sympathy, causing you to be aware, in looking upon the beauty of the face, of the greater beauty of the soul.

But no painter could portray for you, or tell you, with his art of her wonderful voice, of which Karylli, her singing master, said: "There is not another voice like it in the world; *elle vient du du diable ou du bon Dieu!*" Karylli, the wisest and wickedest *maestro* in all Europe. It may be that, spellbound, you yourself have listened to her, yes, that you have had your soul thrilled by her singing, but you could not have known that Elenori, the divine Elenori, was Eleanor Moore. It was Signor Tonnelli, the little king of his realm of opera, who gave to her that *nom de théâtre*, smiling and rubbing his hands because, he said, it was an absurd name that she would make famous. He was like that; he liked to smile when he

boasted. But all that is far ahead of my story.

My memory pleases itself to rest upon that afternoon in Mr. Converse's studio. There was so much of laughter and gay talk and high spirits, and all who were there became good friends so quickly.

Bertrand had come to me, bearing Mr. Converse's invitation to the tea, and he had particularly requested me to be early at the studio. He was most anxious, for his friend's sake, that Madame Pointer should be favorably impressed with Mr. Converse and the studio tea.

"Be sure to be on hand early, Florimond," he had cautioned. "We must do all we can to make it go off smoothly and — and — well, get around in time to look things over, will you, and see that Converse has everything necessary."

I fear Bertrand did not feel very sure of Mr.

Converse as a host, nor was he very sure of Miss Moore, either, but he did not know Eleanor as well as I did.

Miss Moore lived with her aunt, Mrs. Crackenby, two floors below Mr. Converse's studio. Mrs. Crackenby was a dry, thin, nervous little lady whose character was amusingly contradictory, for one day she would be assertive and independent, dictating what the whole world should do, and the very next day, perhaps, would find her quite helpless and meek, leaning upon Eleanor for moral support and counsel. It was she who had been responsible for Eleanor's opportunity to study in Europe. Mrs. Crackenby had been a veritable general in the affair, riding over the objections of poor Mrs. Moore, her sister — objections that Mrs. Crackenby in the heat of argument characterized as "sentimental selfishness"— and defraying the expenses for the experiment out of her own purse, which was none too well filled. But once arrived in

Paris, she never lost an opportunity of extolling the advantages of her own country and lauding her own people, to the great disadvantage of "these foreigners," as she called the French among whom she had come to dwell. On one point, however, she was invariably consistent: her confidence in Eleanor's future never wavered; she was certain that some day "that child's voice" would be heard all over the world. Her pride in her favorite niece furnished the theme of her daily conversation, and might have reached the point of being ridiculous, or pathetic, had it not been so well justified.

On my way to the studio I knocked at Eleanor's door. She opened it in person. Try as I may to remember the dress she wore, I can not. All I know is that it gave the impression of summer, light and cool and fresh and dainty, and that somewhere about it there was a shade of pale green like the green one sees in the stems of white lilies. I can re-

member quite clearly though that, as she stood at the door, she wore over her dress an apron. It was not a real workaday apron, I am convinced, but a make-believe affair of lace and sheer linen that seemed to say to the beholder: "We are very busy, for we are working today, but, if you insist, we have plenty of time to talk to you."

Eleanor greeted me with a smile. "You have caught me in the last act of breaking up poor Aunt Ella's home," she said. "You are just in time to help. Wait."

She disappeared but was back again in an instant, holding aloft a huge gleaming samovar. I made haste to deposit my hat and cane and relieve her of the burden.

"Will you take it up-stairs to the studio for me?" she asked. "I wouldn't trust those boys with it."

I bowed as well as I could with that great thing in my arms, and I suppose I must have presented a grotesque picture for she laughed

I bowed as well as I could

outright. "Don't go yet," she said, "Aunt Ella really must see you." She came closer and whispered: "Beware of Aunt Ella. She is in despair. She believes the revolution has really come at last."

"Aunt Ella!" she called, and Mrs. Crackenby came from an adjoining room. I was not unprepared for her accusatory greeting.

"You, too!" she exclaimed sadly, with all the disappointment in her voice that Cæsar must have employed in addressing Brutus. "So even you will help Eleanor rob our home of everything it holds. All day I have done nothing but watch one loved possession after another disappear. I have stood here helpless to avert the ruin."

"Now, auntie," interposed Eleanor, "don't scold Prince Florimond. He can't help it."

"Assuredly, Madame, I can not," I made haste to say. "I am impressed into the service of the queen."

"Yes, I know, just as, before you came,

those three boys were impressed into 'the service of the queen.'" She was slightly sarcastic, I fear. "Those boys have taken nearly every article of furniture I own and have mounted up those stairs with it all. It's been going on since morning. Our beds are almost the only things they left us. My home is wrecked, despoiled, but I never thought you would assist these young vandals. I am disappointed, sir."

"Flee," warned Eleanor. Again I bowed with as much grace as I was able to command and lost no time in departing. "I'll be up as soon as I take off this apron," Eleanor called to me and I turned in time to see her, still laughing, give Mrs. Crackenby a sly kiss, and to hear her say: "Now, you know, Aunt Ella, you really love teas."

The poor lady's protest reached me as I climbed the stairs. "I like tea in my own home with my own things, or in somebody's else's home with somebody else's things but, *not* in somebody else's home with my own things!"

I entered the studio, bearing on high the gleaming samovar, like a votive offering. There was a chorus of appreciation from the three young gentlemen and Bruce Converse, regarding me wryly, remarked: "So, she has put you to work, too."

"She has so far honored me," I replied, as I put down my burden on a table and took a view of the transformed studio. One really would not have recognized it. Eleanor's magic hands had converted it into a most attractive place, but, as I gazed upon pictures, rugs, tables, chairs, ornaments and tea things, I realized the justice of poor Mrs. Crackenby's complaint. Her household gods had all been taken away to do honor to Mr. Bruce Converse's guests.

Eleanor had found time to obtain flowers from a shop in the Rue Vavin, roses, *hortensias* and bluets, which were tastefully arranged about the room and when, presently, she appeared with Mrs. Crackenby, she brought

sprays of *muguet* for every one, including myself, and pinned the good-luck blossoms on our coats. When she was performing this service for Converse, I overheard him say to her quite tenderly: "You are a wizard; you have made this old barn of a place into a real home. If you weren't so good-looking, Eleanor, they would burn you for a witch. You've made me want to have a real home of my own. I intend to fix up this place, with your help."

She was very pleased; I could see that, and I saw her pat the flower in his buttonhole gently as she finished fastening it. "This will bring you happiness and good fortune," she said.

He caught her hand as she was hurrying away and detained her.

"After the others are gone," he said to her, "you and Aunt Ella and I will go somewhere for dinner and celebrate all by ourselves; will you?"

"I've my practising to do: the accompanist is coming."

"Then put it off. I won't take any refusal. It's agreed, then, we'll go to that island in the Bois and have the man row us over in his big gondola and pretend we are in Venice."

She did not answer. "You *must* go with me," he said again.

Joy demands company. Grief may sit alone in a corner, ashamed, or afraid, to knock at another's door, but Joy rushes in and cries: "Put aside what you have to do and follow me, for I am Joy. I will not let you labor, or sorrow, but you must come with me and share in my happiness. I will not be alone!" It is the way of the world, and it is a good way.

There was not much general conversation. Every one was in an expectant attitude which was most apparent in Fiorella, a model who had been fortuitously engaged to act as maid for the occasion, and who was now nervously trying to remember her duties. The service most upon her mind was to open the door promptly when any one rang, so she did not

venture far away, but stood with eyes on the door, as if it had been a bird, and she a cat, ready to spring upon it.

Eleanor had seated herself at the table with the shining samovar steaming in front of her. Often I think of her as I saw her then. Her face, usually pale, glowed with color that came and went under her white skin, and in her eyes the reflected light from the samovar made little stars in the blue night.

I was standing near the door when the bell rang, and Fiorella at a bound opened it to admit Madame Pointer and the Vicomte de Volney. With them was a Mr. Spaulding Knapp, a short, stout, florid gentleman of middle age who walked heavily on his heels. I had met him before at Madame Pointer's. He was one of those *milliardaires* America is celebrated for in Europe, and whose doings and opinions attract so much the attention of their countrymen. My punctuality in arriving at the studio had its reward in a pleasant smile

of recognition from Madame Pointer. "This is a delightful surprise. I did not know we were to have the pleasure of seeing you here," she said as I bent over her shapely gloved hand.

Presentations were quickly made by De Volney, and soon every one was laughing and talking except Mrs. Crackenby, who, as I had several times before observed, maintained an uncompromising reserve when any of the "foreigners" were near. Madame Pointer had made a very pretty speech to Bruce Converse about his picture that now was hers.

"You have reason to be proud of the friends you possess, Mr. Converse," she added, "for they are extremely loyal admirers. I hope that henceforth you will allow me to count myself among them."

He was greatly flattered, as, indeed, he should have been. Any one would have been, I am sure, for Madame Pointer, beautiful and attractive as she was always, had never, it seemed to me, appeared more charming; but I

have found myself saying the very same thing of her each time that I have seen her, and I shall probably say it more than once again before I have finished this history. She was dressed in one of those costumes of severe simplicity which so well become American ladies. It was of a dark soft material, and there was lace at the neck and a lace blouse showing under the coat. The only note of color was a sweeping bird of Paradise on the dark straw hat under which the carefully coiffed hair showed, hair of a soft golden brown that harmonized so well with the plumage above it.

Have you not observed that when a little company is gathered together and a slight embarrassment rests upon all because some of its members are strangers to the others, it very often happens that an incident, a contretemps, centering greater embarrassment upon one person for the moment, will so relieve the rest that immediately the atmosphere of constraint vanishes? It was an afternoon of such mis-

haps. Fiorella, the model, quite nervous about her new and unfamiliar employment, began by shocking every one when Mr. Spaulding Knapp, who spoke no French, gave into her keeping his hat and cane.

"Will you take these?" he asked, and seeing that she failed to comprehend, he questioned: "Do you speak English?"

"Yes, my dar-r-ling, goot-by, damn!" Fiorella proudly replied. Poor girl! It was all the English she knew. Those unconscionable young art students had taught her to repeat her limited vocabulary in that parrot-like fashion.

Soon after the unhappy Fiorella was again the unwilling center of attraction. Eleanor, preparing the first cup of tea, gave a little exclamation of horror as the steaming water flowed from the samovar. Immediately all crowded about her, gazing into the cup. It was astonishing.

The water was a brilliant ultra-marine!

Alas! Fiorella had followed the example of many a maid more experienced in house cleaning, and never having before seen a samovar, and imagining it to be a sort of ornamental vase, she had used it as a catch-all. The offending object was fished out. It was one of Mr. Converse's paint brushes which he had been using that very morning. Fiorella had come across it, and it went into the most convenient hiding-place. Eleanor was quite crestfallen when her prized samovar was abandoned for an ordinary pitcher, but I dare say the tea was all the better for that, though I am not a connoisseur in the matter of tea. I abominate it. When I was a small boy, people in France never drank tea, unless they were sick, so it has always reminded me of the apothecary's shop.

There was laughter later at the expense of Mr. Sammy Potts, Mr. Johnny Judd and Mr. Amos Tuttle. Madame Pointer was greatly interested in the young gentlemen, and enthus-

iastically appealed to Mr. Knapp to share her delight.

"Spaulding, who would ever imagine they came from America? Aren't they exactly what you have always expected to see in the Latin Quarter?"

That remarkable Mr. Spaulding Knapp gave a short dry laugh. "Not I. As soon as I saw them I knew where they were from. I've been over here often enough to have learned that when an American boy fresh from the United States lands in Paris to study art, that costume breaks out over him the first thing like a rash."

Those three young gentlemen blushed violently when every one laughed. "Roughhouse him!" came the quick command from one, and there is no telling what might have happened if the Vicomte de Volney had not just then been guilty of the unpardonable awkwardness of dropping his cup on the floor — Bertrand de Volney of all men!

"Oh, dear, I am so glad it was one of our cheap ones!" exclaimed Mrs. Crackenby before she thought, and that diverted the laughter away from Bertram, but Eleanor was forced to go into an explanation of her aunt's unexpected remark.

It seemed that no one was to escape. Even my turn came. We had all been talking of the noble exercise of walking — footing, as we say — and I had proclaimed my own prowess perhaps a little vaingloriously, for ever since my youth I have been a great walker. Mrs. Crackenby, who, as I knew from previous conversations with her, shared my enthusiasm for pedestrianism, and who had a way of airing her sometimes astonishing French, spoke up with a tone of authority.

"*Oh, oui; je le sais. Monsioo est un vrai vieux marcheur!*" Which, if you do not know — and I hope you do not — I must tell you means something very different from what it seems to mean. It was a long time before

I heard the last of it from Bertrand de Volney.

After the tea Bruce Converse showed us many of his pictures, placing one after another in the frame upon the easel, and that surprising Mr. Spaulding Knapp insisted upon buying three of them for his gallery at home; and they were the very three, as I knew, that Mr. Converse most prized. De Volney and I exchanged glances. Bertrand was openly delighted that this Mr. Knapp should show such a true appreciation of Bruce Converse's work. "*Eh bien, et celui-là, . . . trouvez-vous quil vous comprenne?*" he said aside to Converse, a little maliciously.

The daylight was slowly fading when Madame Pointer rose to depart. She and Mr. Converse had been talking earnestly together.

"It has been an afternoon of such real delight that I am unwilling it should end." She extended her hand to the painter, and in her musical voice there was a warm cordial vibration. "Can't we prolong it? The Vicomte

de Volney, Mr. Knapp and I, are dining together to-night at the Pavillon Henri Quatre at Saint-Germain, so that we may look over the valley and see the lights of Paris. We should all be so glad if you would join us."

Eleanor, who was standing near, glanced quickly at Bruce Converse, and a shadow seemed to darken the blue of her eyes as she heard his eager acceptance. Madame Pointer turned toward her.

"Mr. Converse has just promised to make one of our little party at dinner to-night, Miss Moore. Can't you and your aunt go with us?"

Eleanor shook her head. "I'm sorry. My accompanist is coming and I must work."

"Too bad, but I shall not attempt to persuade you away from your work," Madame Pointer responded, her eyes meeting those of Eleanor in frank friendliness. "I have heard of your singing, and some day I hope you will give me the pleasure you have given others. We must try to repeat this afternoon soon.

It has been very delightful. Such joys do not come to us, or at least to me, so often that we can afford to neglect them."

Every one in leaving thanked Eleanor for the afternoon, just as if she had been the hostess and the studio had been her home, and not the home of Mr. Bruce Converse. Indeed, I think no one recalled it had been his tea.

When at last her aunt had gone down-stairs and Fiorella had departed — and this is one of those things I learned of long afterward; would to heaven I had known of it then! — Eleanor was left alone in the darkening studio. The rearrangement of the furniture had been left for the morrow, but in setting to rights the small misplaced objects, as most women will before they quit a room, Eleanor came upon the working blouse of Bruce Converse with the spray of *muguet* pinned to it. The flower was already wilted. She smiled wistfully — he had forgotten all about it. And then, though she herself could hardly have told why,

she sank into a chair before the easel, and covering her face with her hands, sobbed as if her heart were breaking.

She was still weeping softly when Mrs. Crackenby, whose mood of independence had been slowly returning during the afternoon, called up from the second floor below:

"Eleanor, what can be keeping you?"

There was a note of injury in the voice. Mrs. Crackenby waited the fraction of a minute for a reply before she launched her ultimatum.

"If you don't come down I shall have my dinner alone. You may tear my apartment to pieces, but I do not intend to have my dinner spoiled as well."

Eleanor dried her tears, and closing the studio door, went slowly down the stairs to her dismantled home.

CHAPTER VI

A GOOD NIGHT AT THE STUDIO DOOR THAT TAKES A LONG TIME TO BE SAID

WOMEN suffer more than men from false pride. By false pride I do not mean vanity, which the sexes share about equally, but that self-consciousness which causes us to fear criticism, or misunderstanding of actions that are in themselves blameless. I believe that many a spoiled bud of romance would have opened into full bloom had the light of frank explanations been permitted to dispel chilling clouds of doubt.

If Eleanor Moore had said to Bruce Converse the next day when they were restoring to their proper places the borrowed feathers that had made his studio so fine: "How could you so soon forget the little flower I gave to you?" or "Why were you so eager to accept

Madame Pointer's invitation to dinner when you had already invited me?" it is probable I should not now be writing this story; yes, it is very likely there would never have been any story to write, for who ever heard of a book about a young man who said, "I love you," and his sweetheart answered, "I love you, too," and they were married right away without any difficulties intervening whatever? No, books are not written about such simple matters. Yet it quite often happens that way in life, all of which is a reason, I suppose, why so many people who read books prefer philosophies.

However, Eleanor asked no questions of the sort, but listened with much interest while Mr. Converse told her the dinner had been delightful, that Madame Pointer was altogether charming, and that he had found Mr. Spaulding Knapp to be a very discerning art critic. As for the broken engagement, it never entered

his head; besides, had not Eleanor declined his invitation, even though he had said he would not accept her refusal? And as for the *muguet*, Mr. Bruce Converse never once thought of it again until he found a sprig of grass pinned on his blouse. It broke into bits as he removed it, and he smiled quite contentedly as he thought of how successful the tea in his studio had been and what a trump Eleanor was to go to all that trouble.

But they had dinner on the island in the Bois, none the less, and the very next night; but it was too cold to eat under the trees, so they must go inside, and though they were not able to make believe it was Venice, they all had a very good time and felt better for it, even Mrs. Crackenby.

"Ever since you showed me what could be done with that studio of mine, Eleanor," announced Bruce Converse, as the three drove back to the city, "I've determined to have a

home. I intend to spend a part of this newly acquired wealth in getting things to make the place look as it did when you got through with it. I want you to help me, for there's no one who knows more about fitting up a comfortable home than you."

Mrs. Crackenby, who was not given to subtleties, scented a vague danger.

"If Eleanor ever has a home of her own," she proclaimed, "it won't be over here among foreigners, but in her own country where she belongs."

"Oh, come now, Aunt Ella," teased Converse, who long ago had permitted himself the familiarity of adoption, "you can't pretend these 'foreigners' aren't able to teach us a good deal."

"Oh, I admit that part of it," assented Aunt Ella, abandoning, however, none of her attitude of battle. "They're older than we are and have had a lot more time than we have ever had to paint and sing and play the piano, but peo-

ple, I hold, belong in their own countries, and after they've learned what the foreigners can teach them it's time they should go back home."

Converse laughed heartily. "Be careful, Aunt Ella," he warned, "or I'll have to take you through the Louvre again." The threat was reminiscent of a memorable visit to the old masters when Mrs. Crackenby had summed up her impressions by saying that if the museum didn't soon get something new the people would stop coming to it.

It was quite another Aunt Ella, an Aunt Ella complacent and yielding, who went with them when Bruce Converse made his first purchase for the home he was building, a carved Breton chest that he had often admired at Madame Geiger's shop in the Boulevard Montparnasse. Madame Geiger squinted at them doubtfully as they entered, but when she saw how young and lovely was Eleanor and how handsome was Mr. Bruce Converse, she became quite human and insisted upon showing them

sets of china and many other things that two young persons who thought of beginning housekeeping should surely have.

More than one treasure left Madame Geiger's tempting shop that day: a marvelous ancient *cave à liqueurs* of inlaid pearl that had been the state present of a Chinese noble, a *chaise-longue* and two fauteuils that were guaranteed "of the epoch," a complete tea service and I know not what else; and Mr. Converse insisted that he should receive them all that very afternoon even if he had to go out himself and get a cart to carry them away. Madame Geiger, at first, said it was impossible, as she always does, and, at last, she consented to have it done, as she always does. There were frames to be bought, and a color bill to be paid at Monsieur Foinet's in the Rue Vavin, and so many other things to buy, that it was late when they all got home, and Mrs. Crackenby was tired and almost weepingly complained that she was never allowed a moment's peace in her life. She felt better

after a good hot dinner, which they all had together in Mrs. Crackenby's apartment, but she could not be persuaded to climb the stairs to see how Bruce Converse's purchases looked now that they were in the studio where good Monsieur Guillou, with necessary help, had placed them.

Eleanor, who, if she was tired, did not say so, helped the painter arrange his new possessions. There was much changing about to do and not many opportunities to rest, but it was good fun and she enjoyed directing this young giant to move the furniture from one place to another and watching him lift the heavy chairs almost as easily as if they had been jackstraws. Implicitly, he executed her commands. Heavy pictures were held up untiringly for an indefinite time against the wall until she could decide upon exactly the spot where the nail should be driven, and the great Breton chest, which took three men to carry it up to the studio, was dragged about the room

until it had been "tried" in every available corner. It was well that the Russian author who lived in the apartment directly below had departed with his family for the summer.

At last the work was finished, and Bruce Converse leaned back in the *chaise-longue* and Eleanor sat in one of the chairs that was of the epoch, and, together, they surveyed their achievement.

"It really begins to look like a home," he announced with satisfaction. "I feel just as if I were going to be married."

Oh, youth! Oh, spring-time that puts thoughts of nest building into our heads! Eleanor laughed. They were both very happy.

"And I feel," she said, rising, with a sigh of content, "that Aunt Ella will soon be wondering what has become of me."

But he would not let her go. She must stay a little longer while he talked of his future, which now, so suddenly, had become bright and assured to him. He painted for her that fu-

ture broadly and with vivid colors as he painted his landscapes. Bruce Converse as an artist, or as a man, was not a sentimentalist. The picture he painted had in it no figure of a woman, but one felt rather than saw there the presence of one who was fair and lovely beyond comparison and who sang throughout the summer day, lending, as says that most human of your great poets, the music of her voice until the world was filled with gladness. Where was then that little cloud that for a moment had darkened Eleanor's horizon? Where were the tears she had so lately shed in that very place? Gone, and in their stead was the bright sunshine, lying golden and warm upon green trees, and in the sky the rainbow of God's promise.

"Good night, Bruce." He held the hand she had outstretched to him until they were upon the landing. Suddenly he raised it to his lips and covered it with kisses.

"You have been very good to me, Eleanor." His voice trembled and the hand that still held

hers shook a little. "Sometimes I feel that I am a selfish brute, thinking only of myself and my own affairs and showing you very little of the gratitude I feel toward you for all that you are continually doing for me."

With an effort she held her own voice steady and level, and raised her eyes to his, unabashed, in the old spirit of their comradeship. "Good night." And she went swiftly down the stairs.

He leaned over the balustrade, holding for her a lighted candle that illumined the steps and cast dark wavering shadows in the corners. He heard her key enter the lock of her door.

"Good night, Eleanor," he called down to her.

"Good night, Bruce," the half-whispered words came up to him.

CHAPTER VII

THE VICOMTE DE VOLNEY PRESENTS HIS WELL-FORMED THEORIES OF THE DANGERS OF LOVE AND MEETS OPPOSITION FROM AN UNEXPECTED QUARTER

MAY is the most beautiful month of all the year in Paris. It is then that the trees are greenest, the sky is bluest, the grass softest and the air clearest. The winter blanket of dull skies is rolled off, and Nature leaps out of her bed with a little sigh of contentment, for it is so good to be alive. It is then, too, that the chestnut trees along the Champs-Elysées are white with bloom, and that, alone, is enough to make the city beautiful.

The Vicomte de Volney and Madame Leslie Pointer were among those who strolled down the Champs-Elysées on that fifth day of May with the whole world made radiant by the beams

of the afternoon sun. It is on this fifth day of May that many years ago a great Frenchman breathed his last. Now the Vicomte de Volney is not a Bonapartist and neither am I. His forefathers and mine were not very well disposed to the little corporal who tore down the lovely temple of ancient France and drove out those who worshiped therein, but those days are long since passed, and we of the younger generation know that General Bonaparte was a great man of France, one of the greatest men of all times. And on the fifth day of May, which is the day of his death in Sainte-Hélène, the sun sets directly within that Arc de Triomphe raised to his fame. If you stand in the Place de la Concorde, you can see the red ball sink between the sides of the arch like a celestial torch illuminating the scarlet path of glory.

It is a sight that is worth seeing. Pilgrimages have been made — yes, for a long time

they were made every year — just to see what can be seen on no other day in the entire calendar, and now the Vicomte de Volney was walking down the broad tree-lined avenue, the most beautiful street in the world, that he might show Madame Pointer this wonderful thing. They made their way in leisurely fashion, with the declining sun at their backs, talking about many things and now and then bowing to some passing acquaintance in one of the never-ending processions of automobiles and carriages that swept by them. The fountains of the Rond Point were playing, and they stopped for a moment to watch them before crossing over the avenue to the side nearest the river, where they stood observing the effect of the sun through the marble archway. While it made its quick brilliant progress, neither of them spoke.

The glorious day ended in a burst of red that tinged the whole western sky, and then,

before their eyes, the red began to fade, changing into purples and orange, with the Arc de Triomphe looming up, in silhouette, like a great black tomb at the top of the avenue. De Volney, without speaking, touched his companion lightly on the arm and motioned to her to look across the river. The winged angels of the Pont Alexandre III, with their leaping horses, shone like molten gold, and beyond them, over the exquisite roof of the Invalides, rose the gilded dome of the real tomb of the emperor, catching the last rays of the dying sun. At that moment it seemed as if even the day had been ordained by the great conqueror who lay alone in the crypt below that dome of gold; yes, it seemed as if the world were only waiting to follow again his bidding as once it did.

When they turned to go they were both still under the spell of that grandiose spectacle they had witnessed, but presently, they fell to talking about it, which is always an indication that the first ineffable impression one has received

has hardened into the tangible. In the process of fixing it upon the memory, and in the attempt to define what one has felt, there is something that escapes.

Madame Pointer, her sympathies quickened by what she had seen, spoke with feeling of Napoleon as having been treated ungratefully by Destiny, in whom his faith was so strong.

"Do you believe in Destiny?" asked the viscount.

"And you?" she parried, for a woman likes to have first the opinion of her questioner.

"Not in the sense that it is blind and fatal," he replied. "Men make their own destinies, or, more often, their destinies are made for them by their friends or their enemies. I believe that we are more dependent upon our friends, or rather upon those around us, than we are upon ourselves."

Madame Pointer looked at him questioningly, not concealing her surprise, for he was speaking with unwonted seriousness and his words

seemed at variance with her estimate of his own character. She did not consider that he would lightly brook the interference of either friends or enemies with his own affairs. "Don't misunderstand me," he continued in answer to her glance — he had a way of responding to her questions before she had formulated them into words; "I do not mean that men may lie back idly waiting for their friends to act for them. It is a curious fact that, no matter how close our relationship may be to others, in the little crises of life, as in the last great crisis, we must take our way alone. But it is also true, despite a seeming contradiction, that, sometimes, a word that we speak aptly, or a deed that is done at a critical moment, may change the lives of our friends. It often so happens that we see their way more clearly than they can see it for themselves."

In Madame Pointer's mind was the clear memory of recent conversations that they had had regarding the future of Bruce Converse

and of Eleanor Moore. She smiled as she asked, with a touch of kindly irony:

"And you would like to play the part of Destiny in the career of your talented young friend, Mr. Converse?"

She had hoped the lightness of her tone would alter his mood, for never had she known him to be so profoundly serious; he seemed almost somber. But De Volney suddenly stopped, and facing her, looked into her smiling eyes with an earnestness that, in spite of herself, startled her. "Madame Pointer," he said, "I want you as an ally. I want your help."

She could not hide her astonishment. "My help? I do not see —" she began, but he interrupted her.

"I need your help. For some time I have worked alone — for a long time, it seems to me, ever since I first saw the possibility of those two falling hopelessly in love with each other, making wrecks of their careers merely because

they do not know. Now I feel that I am doomed to failure if some one, some woman, does not help. It is not I who am doomed to failure; the real failures will be those two with talents far above the ordinary, touching already the higher world of genius, who are ready to throw it all away, yes, to throw all that away —" He was speaking more rapidly than was his custom, and the English words overran themselves, coming as they would without his stopping to choose them. He was not quite master of himself.

"They could be so much, those two, they could do so much; and then, at this time while they are yet forming, while their minds are still the minds of little children and while they are so swiftly climbing up to the very high places, they throw it all away for — love!" He could not conceal his contempt. "Oh, if they could only be dissuaded; if they could be prevented from doing this great harm to themselves!" His open hand stretched slightly out

toward her in appeal, and it impressed her, for gestures were rare to him.

"I know you will argue," he went on. "I am aware of what you have already intimated. Your woman's heart, the sensitiveness of all good women that makes them shrink from causing suffering or inflicting the slightest pain, even though good may follow, will not let you see this as it is. He and she are dropping into this thing unconsciously. They don't even know they are in love; at least, Converse does not. Men seldom do know they are in love until it is, as you say, all over. She suspects, I think. Women generally suspect."

She glanced at him sharply to determine whether cynicism lay under his remark, but she saw in the man before her only one who was deeply concerned in the welfare of his friend, and her disposition to taunt him for taking the subject too gravely yielded to admiration for one whose interest in another was so genuine and unselfish.

"Might they not be happy together and aid instead of harming each other?" she urged.

As if he had again discerned the working of her mind and had seen the subtle change that had been brought about in her attitude, his own tone altered as they resumed their walk up the avenue. He no longer appealed, but discussed the situation of his friend with calm logic. "They would only stand in each other's way," he asserted, in reply to her question. "Miss Moore is really a harmful influence to Bruce Converse at this time; that is, I mean the sentiment she inspires is harmful to his work and to her own, not that she herself is harmful. Certainly, she does not mean to do him any injury. She would sacrifice anything for him, for his success. Women are like that; they make sacrifices more readily than men do."

Madame Pointer smiled. At least this man, who was supposed to regard all women as dangerous potentialities, knew how to be just.

"It is this way, to illustrate," he continued.

"I went to his studio yesterday. Miss Moore was there. It was in the morning when, as she has told me, she generally practises. When I came in he was seated before his easel, and on it was a big unfinished portrait of her. Have you seen his portraits of her?"

Madame Pointer answered in the negative. She had been to Converse's studio once since the tea and she recalled that she had seen only landscapes.

"He does not show them — now," said De Volney, with a pause before the last word. "They are bad and he knows it, but he does not understand why. It is because he is not a portrait painter and never should attempt to be, but it disappoints him because he does not succeed when he tries it. He becomes discouraged, for he would like to be able to paint portraits. Most artists who paint landscapes have the desire to paint portraits when they are young. Converse wastes much time at them. Now Miss Moore knows that he would

like to be a painter of portraits, and because it is his wish, she tries to help him gratify it. She poses for him. She does all that she can to encourage him. She does not understand that it is bad for him. Women never do understand when they are in love that anything can be bad for the man they love if he wants it.

"When I came in I found my friend in one of those moods that invariably follow his essays in portraiture. In spite of all the encouragement he has had recently, he was in the depths. He had not been working. Ah, I knew what he had been doing. He had been quarreling with himself, but he did not wish me to know, for I had talked to him before. I went to the picture and looked at it closely. 'Take care,' he said; 'you will get your beard in the paint.' It was a little subterfuge, for I could see the canvas was quite dry. I passed my hand over it just to show him I knew he had not touched it that morning. I do not know how long she had been there, but she was already tired from

"You will get your beard in the paint"

standing while he had been trying to force himself to the task. He had not had the heart to begin. Poor chap! How blue he was! You see how it is," he concluded.

An automobile drew up to the curb, swinging in swiftly from the oil-blackened center of the avenue. From it leaped Mr. Spaulding Knapp. He came toward them holding out his hand. "Well met!" he ejaculated. "I got a glimpse of you two from my car just as I was on my way to the Bois. Let me take you for a spin before it is quite dark. It would be a great pleasure."

Madame Pointer welcomed the advent of this friend of her youth. She was vaguely troubled by the Vicomte de Volney's remarks, and more than once this alert shrewd man of affairs with his quick judgment had brought her comfort by timely words of advice.

"Spaulding," she said suddenly, "if two young persons are in love with each other, is it a wise thing to step in between them in order

that they may follow out to success their great careers? "

He looked at her quizzically as if he expected some jest to underlie her words, but in the gaze that he encountered he read something of her perturbation. Unhesitatingly, punctuating his speech with a short decisive gesture, he gave his opinion. " All the careers of men and women the world has ever seen," he declared, " are not worth a single hour of the happiness that a true and good love can bring."

Madame Pointer glanced at De Volney, mutely challenging him to enter the lists with this new champion whose opinions were so often dominant in great affairs.

" I am surprised," answered the viscount, meeting her glance and speaking slowly. " I had thought the business men of America were so practical, so wise. I did not know they had such high appreciation of — of sentiment."

" Viscount," replied that surprising Mr.

Spaulding Knapp, "that is one of your mistaken European notions. The American business man is really the most romantic idealist in the world to-day."

Both Madame Pointer and the Vicomte de Volney laughed heartily at the unexpected response. Mr. Knapp, however, persisted.

"You are incredulous, both of you — even you, Leslie, who as an American should know better," he said. "But come, I will convince you as we ride along."

They entered the automobile, and as they made their way through the Avenue du Bois past the returning line of carriages, he continued his argument, contrasting with keen humor the tranquil satisfied existences of wealthy Europeans with the ambitious fevered lives of American millionaires. "They work until they go to their graves," he said, "because they are never satisfied; and the lack of satisfaction is the proof positive of the possession of an ideal. We may differ about the

value, or the beauty, of these ideals. It may be the founding of a great university; it may be the bestowal of libraries for the poor; it may be the building of hospitals for the sick; or it may be the acquisition of power, such as inspired your own Napoleon, Viscount; but they are all ideals and romantic, too. You can not deny it."

They had entered the Bois and were swiftly speeding through the *allées* of arched trees. Bertrand looked at Madame Pointer. He might have spoken, but he saw that she was not attending to the argument, but was drinking in the peace and fragrance of the darkening woods. The serenity of the approaching night seemed to communicate itself to them all, and they were silent.

CHAPTER VIII

A FAIR PLOTTER LISTENS WITH SWEET CHARITY TO A DRY DISCOURSE ON LOVE

IT was very soon after this that Gaspard brought in to me a letter from Madame Pointer. My faithful old servant is becoming as suspicious as a cat. His solicitous gaze was fixed on me as he delivered the missive as if he would have said, had he dared: "I know the handwriting on this envelope. I have seen it before on letters that have come to this house. It were well that my master have a care." Ordinarily, Gaspard's jealous watchfulness serves only to amuse me, but now I was conscious of being annoyed. The advent of Madame Pointer's letter had coincided happily with a moment of pleasant fancy I wished to prolong, and I found it difficult to do so with old Gaspard standing by.

"You remain there idly staring. Is it that you have nothing to do?" I asked him with some acerbity.

"The lady's servant who brought the letter said he was to wait for an answer." Slyly he had let me know that he was not ignorant of the identity of my correspondent.

"I shall ring for you when my answer is ready." He withdrew reproachfully. Left alone, I sought again to reconstruct my day dream. Strange how the imagination paints a vivid complete picture from the most trifling suggestion! I had but to close my eyes and, as if loosed from the envelope I had opened, there seemed to come into my room the womanly, gentle, friendly spirit of Madame Leslie Pointer. I saw her there before me. How satisfying she was to look upon! Here was one whose beauty was mature, yet delicate and spiritual, like the pictures of the Preraphaelites, a beauty of the type that the English people, a generation ago, claimed as their own. How refined

and sympathetic was her trained intelligence; how kindly and companionable her humor! I felt I had but to open my eyes and she would be standing there, her lips parted, ready to speak. Perhaps—

"Did monsieur ring?" It was Gaspard, standing at the door stupidly. Sometimes the teachings of philosophy are difficult to put into practise.

"I had not even formulated the intention of ringing," I said to him with severity, and his white *favoris* disappeared again behind the closed door as I took from its envelope the note Madame Pointer had written. It was brief:

"My dear Friend:

"Will you come and have tea with me this afternoon? I wish to see you on a matter of importance. I shall be alone."

Hastily I despatched my acceptance, placing myself at her disposition.

How beautiful was that ride to Ville d'Avray, where Madame Pointer had installed herself in a villa by the side of that charming lake so beloved of Corot! Impatient and spurred by curiosity though I was, I could have wished that lovely stretch of road between the lines of tall poplars were longer. Often as I have traversed it I would have prolonged the pleasure.

The day was quite warm, but the tree-tops swayed lazily to a light breeze. It was too warm, in fact, and the moment my automobile stopped at the villa after winding through the little park surrounding it, I was conscious that the day was considerably hotter than we are accustomed to early in May. But Madame Pointer, of whom I had caught a glimpse as I drove up, looked refreshingly cool as she walked gracefully across the grass to greet me. Her dress was of white, of fine linen, perhaps, or it may have been of the material that is called lawn, for there was about it a softness, the

quality of caressing the figure, that fine lawn has, and yet it had that crisp freshness one observes in linen dresses and is grateful for on a hot day.

She led the way to a tea table under one of the great oak trees near the villa, and no sooner were we seated, than she launched into an explanation of her note. De Volney had convinced her. Together they had formed quite a plot to prevent Eleanor Moore and Bruce Converse from rushing or falling or leaping — whatever word you wish to express precipitate action — into tangles of the affections that would divert their interest at this critical time from their careers. She and De Volney had planned well. There was to be no active opposition such as only too often fans the flame of love, but Eleanor and Bruce Converse were to be hedged about so artfully by circumstances that they would naturally drift apart rather than toward each other. De Volney was to see in a few days Signor Tonnelli,

the famous impresario, on Eleanor's behalf. If he were successful — and De Volney tolerated no doubt of it — Eleanor's immediate work would keep her entirely occupied; it might probably take her away from Paris. Madame Pointer on her side was to induce Bruce Converse by the offer of attractive commissions to undertake work that would keep him away from the studio and the dangerous proximity of Eleanor.

"They must not be allowed to fall in love," she asserted very earnestly when she had outlined the plot to me. "We must prevent them. It is our duty as their friends. We are counting upon your aid, for you can help us a great deal."

May I be forgiven for offering the cold conclusions of a student of books, at a time when Madame Pointer's warm heart sought practical assistance, but the opportunity of discoursing on the philosophy of love with this beautiful lady was a temptation I could not resist.

It is a dangerous playground for conversation, this theme of love, yet men and women eagerly enter upon it, scorning the signs of warning that Experience has posted at its boundaries. Lightly they tread together its mazes, now pursuing, now evading each other, now laughing while yet the game is only one of "Come and find me," now standing still with tear-filled eyes when one at last is caught and the other, with object attained, finds the zest gone from the sport; now suddenly facing each other, serious eyes looking into serious eyes and reading there the realization that what had begun as a pleasant pastime to while away an hour, or a day, has become an occupation to last a whole life long.

Yes, it is a dangerous playground, but imagine the soft alluring languor of early summer in the air; the breeze caressing amorously the rose-trees and bringing the perfume to our senses; picture the sylvan scene and this lady as dainty as any of the

noble shepherdesses Boucher used to paint.

"Madame Pointer," I began, "you have not honored me by requesting my advice; you ask from me a different form of service, and that is sufficient honor for me. Surely I could discourage no project that you and Bertrand de Volney were joined in promoting, but —" I halted lamely, seeking an excuse for the discourse I was about to pronounce, but finding none that seemed adequate, I waited for her own imagination to supply what I might have said.

"The sentiment of love," I went on, attacking the subject without further apology, "the sentiment of love, as an inspiration of human activity, has occupied the attention of philosophers from the time of Socrates and Plato down to the most modern of moderns. Aristotle, in his famous Table of Categories, classed passion as sixth among the ten continents of human thought; but, believe me, in

assigning to it such an inferior place he was hardly less in error than in his absurd conception that the universe was a hollow globe to which the stars were pinned fast and that the whole revolved about the motionless earth. To the ancients, love was the aspiration of the soul for the beautiful. In some such fashion, was it treated by Plato, Plutarch and Petrarch. The wise Marcus Aurelius, though he was himself deceived, preached of love's efficiency, and another, whose Christian meditations centuries later remind one strangely of Rome's good emperor, said in his *Imitation:* 'A strong lover standeth in temptations nor will he believe in the wily persuasions of the enemy.'"

I paused that she might have time to apply this sentiment to the particular case of Bruce Converse. She acknowledged her understanding of the point by a smiling nod of the head, but waited to hear what I would say further.

"Pascal, the learned and virtuous, who de-

voted an imperishable *pensée* to Cleopatra's nose," I continued, "confessed with Corneille that 'the cause of love is I know not what and the effects are dreadful.' Thus, Madame, it has been with those who founded their philosophies on the testimony of the senses, after the manner of the ancients. Though their great intellects have essayed the analysis of love, its causes and its effects, alike, have been beyond their wisdom."

"But these sentiments," cried Madame Pointer suddenly, her glance fixed upon me with disconcerting amusement —"these sentiments are but the dry philosophy of the ancients. Fie, Prince de Saint Sauveur, you are not going to class yourself among them! I shall not permit it."

I had not looked for attack from this quarter. For a moment I was nonplused and must clearly have shown it. No, surely, I had no intention of classing myself with the ancients. Admire their teachings I might, but I was not

willing to be of them, least of all at that moment! I had had my theme well in hand, but at a simple word from her its thread had fallen from my grasp. I was groping for it while she was laughing at me. With one gesture I swept all the ancients to perdition, but sternly held to my text.

"Oh, your moderns, most modern lady," I protested, "are just as serious when discussing this fruitful subject of love; more serious, in fact. These later philosophers, who received their original inspiration from Descartes, have reached widely differing conclusions.

"We may read with repulsion Nietzsche, who gave scarcely a thought to passion, except as the desire of possession, but who studied as minutely as a microscopist this aspect of the eternal attraction of the two sexes. With him the inspiration is the instinct, the craving to possess. With what relief we turn from this cruel dissection to the exquisite book Michelet wrote half a century ago when France *était*

malade, and which is to-day as fresh and beautiful and true as it was then. 'Love,' he says, 'is not a crisis, a drama in a single act. It is a succession, often long, of widely differing passions which nourish life and renew it.' Stendhal, before him, had divided love into four phases, each with its subdivisions. He defined love as a crystallization which our own learned Monsieur Faguet, who is a member of that academy to which my father added luster, maintains is but a manifestation of the curiosity which attracts sex to sex. Yes, he would have us believe that man seeks the woman or woman seeks the man because imagination whets the curiosity to discover in the soul of one that which is in harmony with or opposed to qualities in the soul of the other. It is not so much, he holds, the desire to possess as the desire to know. With Schopenhauer, love is the genius of the race, the inborn impulse of procreation. Your own Emerson, who wrote of passion with such pure spirituality, treated love as a divine

madness in the blood of youth. Alas, that the gentle sage should limit the priceless possession to those who are under thirty!"

"No one who is more than thirty will agree with him," Madame Pointer interposed with a laugh.

"No; I for one am quite sure the philosopher who was so wise in other lore was there in error," I replied, "but thus you may see the phenomenon of love has been studied by the great men of all ages, who have endeavored to discover the secret by regarding it spiritually, or physiologically, or even pathologically. But neither ancient nor modern, Madame Pointer, has been able to define love so that those who will may regulate its cause or its effect. It comes we do not know how or why, nor can we prescribe to whom it shall come or when. It is, I think — if I may venture my own poor opinion in the company of such distinguished men as I have cited — love is, I think, a natural law the manifestations of which

are too manifold, and its operations too delicate, for our finite minds to compass. Those who obey it obey not because they would but because they must. For those to whom it comes, it is not a part of life; it is life itself. They are no longer of the world; the world is of them. True love does not stop to consider or falter when opposed. In the eyes of lovers, love alone exists; no other sentiment, no other attribute, no other possession is allowed the privilege of comparison. Between all other things and it there is the difference that lies between the earthly and the divine. Love converts the clod into life. It makes giants of the meanest of men; it gives beauty to the least favored of women. And this natural law, that flows through the universe like a subtle warming fluid which our unillumined eyes may not behold, takes contact when and where and with whom it will, joining two together so that they make one — one in body, one in mind, one in spirit. Those two so joined may be so close

that hand can rest in hand and lip touch lip, or a whole world may lie between them and still they will be indivisibly one; neither time nor space can separate them.

"Though the sight of lovers is so common that, try as they may, they can not disguise themselves from the most innocent of eyes, they escape from us if we would hold them or direct them. One whom the passion has touched may seek his mate, and as a graceful poet of the English has said, 'look all ways to find her,' but we can not lead him to where she stands waiting. Or, finding two together, he may not even see the one we would have pointed out, but will take the one beside her. We may say in all good faith to the prince: 'Here is your princess,' and stand in uncomprehending wonder while he, with radiant countenance, chooses the peasant we have ignored. And Youth, despite your gentle philosopher, may look into the eyes of Age and find there only Youth and Beauty. Like may attract like or, as Schopen-

hauer admirably reasons, opposite attract opposite. There is no rule. The sum of human experience is, as Pascal has said: 'We do not know.'

"And yet, Madame Pointer, this Law of Love is one we may not break. We can not successfully oppose it. We can not govern it, if it be true love. We can not control it in our own beings; how much less then can we expect to control it in the lives of others?"

She looked at me, her expressive intelligent eyes moist with sympathy. Poor lady! She had heard me through my discourse with admirable patience, even with a close interest which I hope was not entirely feigned.

"It was not our intention to force them against their will," she protested. "We would not, I hope, be so unwise, and certainly we could not be so heartless, as to do that. But we do wish, if it be possible, to remove the temptation from them, or to remove them from temptation. They should not be allowed just

now to mar their future by an unwise attachment. Oh, no, really they should not. We wish to keep them apart for the present. There can be no harm in that. If their love be really worthy, it will not be destroyed by a short separation. And we counted on your help. You are such a friend of Miss Moore; she admires you so sincerely and places such reliance on your counsel. We wanted you to be much with her at this time that may be so critical to her. Something must be done. The Vicomte de Volney had counted upon you so implicitly. He will be so disappointed if you will not lend your aid. Oh, we must have your help, Prince Flo—"

She checked herself abruptly and a wave of crimson surged upward over her face. "I beg your pardon," she said. "I had nearly called you Prince Florimond. So many of your friends speak of you in that way instead of by your family name. And then the Vicomte de Volney, of course, calls you always by your

first name. It came quite unconsciously to my lips."

It was true. I knew that few of my friends ever employed my surname. "I beg of you, my dear lady," I replied, "do not apologize. Instead, grant me the delight of knowing you are among those who thus testify their approving friendship for me."

Madame Pointer looked at me with a pleased smile. "Will you have one lump, or two, Prince — Florimond?" she asked.

Upon my word she said it so prettily that I forgot entirely my aversion to tea and stammered, "Two, please," before I thought, and then I was forced to drink that concoction which was bitter-sweet, like the medicine of childhood.

As I was trying to make the best of it, a servant approached and presented to Madame Pointer a card which she read with a little exclamation that was, I thought, not unmixed with pleasure.

"Invite the gentleman to come here," she said to the servant, and then, turning to me: "It is the Duc de Mirabelle. Surely you must know him."

The Duc de Mirabelle! I despised the fellow. He was one of those upstart Frenchmen whose titles have grown and flourished under the republic, and who are to be encountered rarely in the salons of the French but who forever frequent the company of Americans of wealth. I abhor the type.

"Mirabelle, Madame," I answered rather scornfully, playing on the word in French, "is one of our commonest fruits, but I have never heard the name applied to a flower of France."

She laughed uneasily and rose as Mirabelle came walking across the lawn to us with easy assurance, an overdressed foppish dandy with curled mustaches and wearing a monocle. I bowed to him coldly and soon after took my leave, for as I listened to him conversing familiarly with Madame Pointer, moving her

at times to laughter with his shallow wit, it would have been beyond my powers long to have been civil to him.

That night I felt myself in evil mood, foolishly irritated by the untimely visit of that Mirabelle. So I read until late in the *Moralia* of Plutarch, and probably because I had referred to it in talking to Madame Pointer, I turned again to his comforting essay on Amity. Into my mind came the recollection of the plot that had been formed and in which I had been asked to assist. Though my sober sense persuaded me it was folly, I found pleasure in being associated in a plot with so fair a plotter, and I fell asleep remembering how charmingly she had said: "Prince Florimond."

CHAPTER IX

THE WISE SIGNOR TONNELLI IS TAKEN BY SURPRISE

"EL-EA-NOR!" It was the voice of Mrs. Crackenby calling up the stairway. It would seem that the good lady often called thus, for she confessed complainingly to me as I stood by her side that the Russian author was at such times wont to poke his shaggy head out of his door with a querulous "*Madame! Je vous en prie!*" and a bearded Frenchman who wrote comic plays and lived opposite on the same floor would open his door and shout "Oh, yes!" until Aunt Ella would retire exclaiming sarcastically: "They talk of the politeness of the French!"

"El-ea-nor!" She could call undisturbed this afternoon, for neither the Russian, nor

the Frenchman, was at home to hear her and protest. I had come to call upon Miss Moore, and now waited while Mrs. Crackenby tried to make herself heard by her niece, who was in Mr. Converse's studio.

"Pray do not further derange yourself," I requested, observing that her vocal efforts were unavailing. "I shall take the liberty of ascending to the studio that I may have the pleasure of seeing them both."

"She should be working," Mrs. Crackenby complained. "I tell her she wastes lots of time sitting for her picture that never seems to get finished, but she only laughs at me." Mounting the stairs, I heard the good lady still complaining as she reentered her apartment.

Eleanor herself came to the door in response to my ring. Both she and Mr. Converse welcomed me cordially. Converse seemed really relieved that I had come to interrupt him in his work, and looking upon the portrait of Eleanor

before which he sat, I saw that it had progressed badly, for the face had been entirely painted out and he was about to begin again. Oh, fortunate *métier* of the artist that permits one with a stroke of the brush to obliterate faults and start anew! We talked about his work, Mr. Converse frankly admitting his failure and consequent discontent.

"I can't make it go to suit me," he confessed gloomily. "I've tried as hard as I know how, but it's simply a botch."

"Really, I think it's my fault. I'm such a poor model," Eleanor put in. "I always want to talk, and I am so constantly getting out of the pose that Bruce stops in sheer disgust."

Converse shook his head and smiled at her attempt to take upon herself the blame for his failure. "It isn't that," he said. "I'd like to persuade myself that what you say is true, but, unfortunately for me, I know it isn't."

No compunctions of conscience disquieted me when I urged them to go with me for an automobile run into the country. Eleanor would not go, as she wished to practise, and I truly think she was glad of the opportunity to return to her work, but Converse accompanied me and purposely I had the man drive us to Fontainebleau and Barbizon, and we made excursions along little roads leading off the *routes nationales*, past bits of country reminiscent of the pictures of Millet, Rousseau and others of that famous company who had painted in the surrounding woods and fields. Converse's depression vanished.

"By Jove," he exclaimed enthusiastically, "it's enough to make a fellow wish to jump right out of the automobile and begin painting!"

I assented. "Nature just now is in that stage that most baffles you painters, the stage between spring and summer. The sunshine gives to the trees and grass a feeling of youth

and vigor, but all around are the subtle indications that the year is arriving at maturity. Were I an artist, it is now that I should most wish to employ the resources of my art to seizing that which is so difficult to express on canvas."

We talked not at all of portraiture. He was eager to be at work out of doors; the studio had too long claimed him. He would return to these scenes the very next day, he said, and begin to paint in earnest. Willingly, I placed at his disposal my automobile to convey him to Fontainebleau when he wished. We returned to the city rather late and he dined with me at my home, still talking enthusiastically of the work he intended to accomplish.

De Volney is right. We are often little stones on the mountainside waiting for some hand to release us and start us rolling, but, mind you, we must, at least, have the ability to roll. Bruce Converse did what he said he

would do: he began the painting of landscapes and Eleanor's portrait was pushed into a corner with its painted-out face turned toward the wall.

It was De Volney's hand that next started a stone rolling on the mountainside. He had been awaiting the arrival in Paris of Signor Tonnelli, and no sooner had the great little man appeared than Bertrand arranged that he should hear Eleanor sing. As Bertrand and I went together to inform Eleanor, I stopped as we passed through the old Rue des Saints Pères, where I love to linger, and made the purchase of an antique fan of rare beauty as a slight offering to Eleanor, prompted, I dare say, in measure, by my unquiet conscience, which would never relish this little plot of ours. She was delighted with the small gift and grateful beyond expression for the opportunity of being heard by the famous Signor Tonnelli, and after she had tried to thank us she ran up the stairs to acquaint Bruce Converse with the

good news. She returned crestfallen. He was not there.

"He is never in the studio any more," she explained, while De Volney and I looked straight ahead of us.

The meeting with Signor Tonnelli was to be at ten o'clock, precisely, the next morning, and both De Volney and I were there upon the hour, but Eleanor had not yet come. Tonnelli was a round little man with a white face and gray close-cropped beard nearly white, and with dark sharp eyes that flashed even when he was not speaking. His conversation was a series of small explosions. He spoke many languages, all except his own, badly.

"Your Mees — ah, what is it, her name? — your Mees Moore, your wonderful Mees Moore, is late, eh?" he said to Bertrand. "Do not be surprise, for I am not. It show she is already a true prima donna, eh?" He smiled ironically.

Eleanor came in soon after, and I observed

that Tonnelli became at once gruffer and seemed ready to storm. She apologized very sweetly as she gave him her hand.

"Yes, you are late," he blurted out. "You have made me to wait feefteen minute — but then my time it is a nothing to me, eh? Oh, I have so mucha time I do not know what to do with him. I have only about feefty more younga lady to hear sing while I am in Paris — feefty more younga lady with the beautiful voice to wait for, and to-morrow I go away to London."

It was a bad beginning, and matters were not much helped when Eleanor said to him, "I am very sorry."

"Bah! It is of no consequence," was the nearest he would come to accepting her apology. "What you bring to sing?"

"*Manon.*" It was with pleasure that I perceived she had with her the fan I had presented.

"Yes," grunted Tonnelli. "They all wish

to sing *Manon* and they all bringa the fan." He might have been speaking of an army of drilled Amazons, and I should not have refrained from giving the little man a lesson in politeness, great impresario or not, if De Volney had not intervened.

"My friend, Signor Tonnelli, is an old bear, Miss Moore," he said dryly, "but he has no claws, and he is much too tame and too gentle to bite. I beg you not to be alarmed if he growls, for he takes a great pleasure in growling."

Tonnelli laughed in spite of himself, and Eleanor laughed, too, though not very naturally, and I could not laugh at all. I did not get into a good humor with that little man again until Eleanor was singing, "*Je marche sur tous les chemins,*" and then I saw that his eyes were no longer full of spiteful fire, and the smile of irony under his white mustaches was gone, and he was looking upon Eleanor as if he had never spoken gruffly in his

life and would be willing to wait any number of minutes she chose, if only she would sing to him.

"Bravo!" encouraged De Volney when the air was finished and Eleanor had sung it in the key it is written in Massenet's original score.

"H'mph! It is not bad," was Signor Tonnelli's only comment, but he got up from his chair at the end of the big room, and coming up to the piano, quickly dug out from a mass of music the score of an opera.

"There, sing that," he said, thrusting the open book into Eleanor's hands.

"Oh, do you love that? So do I," she exclaimed. I was standing by her side, having just added my congratulations to those of the others. The opera Tonnelli had chosen was *Les Contes d'Hoffman*, and the book was open at Antonia's song: "*C'est une chanson d'amour.*"

"Love it! I did not say I love it. I wish to hear you sing it."

"But I have never studied it."

"You have sung it, though."

"Yes, but for myself. I have never been taught how it should be sung."

"That is what I want. I want to hear you sing something just as you want to sing it for yourself, not as that Professor Karylli has taught you to sing it."

"You know Professor Karylli is my teacher?"

"Yes."

"Who told you?" There was astonishment on Eleanor's face, but it disappeared as she glanced toward Bertrand. "Oh, it was the Vicomte de Volney, of course."

Tonnelli gave a little explosion. "No, younga lady, it was not the Vicomte de Volney; it was just your voice. *Sacré*—" He would have said more, but he checked himself. "Sing it," he commanded with an abrupt gesture as he went back to his seat.

You know that wonderful song of Antonia.

Once it rang through Paris, but that was when I was a very young man, and now it is the barcarole that one always hears. Oh, that song of Antonia as Eleanor sang it for us then!

C'est une chanson d'amour
Qui s'envole,
Triste ou folle,
Tour à tour;
C'est une chanson d'amour.

Signor Tonnelli listened with his eyes closed, but his head nodded from time to time and a smile was upon his face very different from the smile that had angered me. I was foolish to have been so provoked; this round little man had his mind fixed on other things than politeness or pretty speeches. What were conventional forms to him? He wished to break through the surface and discover what lay hidden beneath. He seemed to me to be quite a fine old man as I looked at him there, with his eyes closed and his head nodding. When Eleanor finished the song with a gasp, as it is

done upon the scene, a surprising transformation was wrought in Signor Tonnelli. He leaped from his chair, and in a voice remarkably clear and true carried on Hoffmann's part of the duet:

"*Qu'as tu donc?*"

but no sooner had he done so than he appeared to regret it and stood looking at us all sheepishly.

"I do not wish to hear anything more," he announced, his attitude changing again into gruffness; but alas, now, for the make-believe of this little man who was really gentle-hearted and mild, he could not continue with the pretense. "Younga lady," he confessed, "I will not say I wish not to hear any more, for that would not be true. I would wish to hear all you would sing to me, but it must not be for today. Ah, I shall wish all that for another time." His small black eyes were glistening and he held out his hand. "I thank you; Ton-

nelli thanks you, but—" He would not go on.

"Please say what you were going to say, Signor Tonnelli," Eleanor pleaded.

"*Sapristi!* I meant that for another time, but, yes, I shall say it now. Do you wish to be a prima donna? Do you wish to sing? You are not just a trifler like so many younga lady? You do not wait just for some rich man to fall in love with you, eh? And then it will all go likea that — *pouf!* No, Mademoiselle, I will not believe that. You wish to sing, is it not? You wish to sing not just for you, or just for me, or just for a man who say he love you, but for the whole world. Don't you or do you?"

"I think I know what you mean. I wish to sing."

"Yes, yes, for every one, for the whole world."

"Yes, for every one who will hear me, and for the love of singing."

"Good! I knew it was true. One has only to look at you to know what you say is true.

Then, listen. You will go with me away to Spain; you will give up the study with Karylli; you will study with a teacher who is better than Karylli, whom I will get for you; you will study six month', perhaps it is a year. I will give you a contract. I will pay you while you study. Then you will come back here and I will have you sing in Paris. Will you do it?"

"Give up study with Professor Karylli?" Eleanor echoed. It was unbelievable — Karylli who was known as the greatest of masters!

"Karylli!" thundered Signor Tonnelli, who was very much excited. "Karylli! He is the worst teacher you could have! He is a magician, yes; he is a terribly wise wizard who knows more about the human voice than even I do, younga lady; but he is a bad man and he does not know how to train a pure voice like yours. When you sing I know who put those bad qualities into your voice. I do not have to be told who it is. I know. He is a bad man, and he can make the voice of a woman

like you, yes, even like you, he can make the voice seem just like an obscene song. There might be some — yes, do I not know?— there would be a great many who would clap their hands and shout, if they heard you sing as Karylli would have you sing. They would be like those poor people who laugh when they see the painted women walk along the boulevard. But no, that is not real success. It is not for you. There is something higher than that; it is way up beyond it; and Karylli, he can not go there. He is like your Mephistopheles when he sees the cross. You must give him up, you hear? You must have nothing more to do with him. You must trust in me. If you sign the contract I will make you such a singer as the world is waiting for. Do I not know? Do I not know the great public? Yes, and I know, though it laugh at what is bad, it is always waiting for what is best."

He was in quite a fever of excitement. Under his gray beard his cheeks burned, his

breath came fast, his small fat hands flew about like pigeons not knowing where to alight. Very small indeed were his eyes, but the fire seemed to leap from them and send sparks into the air. Eleanor looked straight at him, quite overcome by his ardor. We were all so astonished we did not think of speaking. Suddenly he stopped. We none of us knew quite what to expect.

"There, there," he growled, as if half angry with himself for having been so wrought to fervor, "there, there, I have said all those thing I did not mean to say to-day. When you sang *Manon* for me, I knew who put those bad woman tricks into your voice and I could have cried, I was so angry and so sorry. But I thought I will tell you about it some other time when you got to know me better, and so I ask you to sing that '*chanson d'amour*' and then I just could not help it. I had to tell you. Now you must go. I want you to think about what I have said, alone, and you will see I am

right. Then you come to me. We will be friends. Good-by."

He was actually pushing all three of us to the door. Even De Volney let himself be hurried out in that fashion, and Signor Tonnelli apparently forgot he was there, until he saw him standing in the hallway.

"Ah, my good friend," he apologized, "I thank you so verra much."

He gave his hand to Eleanor, smiling a little as he had done when we had first seen him. "Promise me one thing, younga lady," he said with a twinkle in his eyes. "Promise me when you are a great prima donna you will not be too — cranky!"

Then he closed the door without even so much as a glance at me. I think he did not remember I had been there at all.

CHAPTER X

EVEN WHEN MASTER HANDS WORK THE STRINGS, PUPPETS WILL NOT ALWAYS DO WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM

THERE was much congratulating and felicitating and handshaking, all round, when we were out upon the street again, and I dare say those who passed us, as we stood gaily talking and laughing, wondered what it was that made us so elated. Bertrand summoned an open fiacre, into which Eleanor and I got, expecting him to follow, but, instead, he lifted his hat ceremoniously and made us a little speech.

"Florimond, I envy you, for you are this day the most favored of mortals. You are permitted to ride by the side of the great singer for whom the world waits. Has not the Sig-

nor Tonnelli told us? To you, Florimond, is given that which the gods alone have always, the privilege of sharing happiness and fame when it is new. Guard Miss Moore well; she is precious now, not only to her friends but to the whole world. I leave her in your care, envying you the honor." He then gaily addressed Eleanor. "Mademoiselle, I make the sacrifice. My duty calls me to Ville d'Avray, that I may acquaint Madame Pointer with your triumph, that there may be another one happy this day because you are happy. *Mademoiselle — Monsieur — je vous salue.*"

We waved our hands to him as the cab drove away, and Eleanor continued to look back at Bertrand and wave to him, until we turned a corner and he was hidden from her sight. Surreptitiously, she raised her handkerchief to her eyes and was silent. The action had not escaped me, and I respected her emotion too much to attempt conversation. I, too, was busy with my own thoughts, for this suggestion

of Signor Tonnelli to take Eleanor away from Paris had sprung, I knew, from his own desires. Perfectly as it accorded with the wishes of those who were in the little plot, it had not been arranged by them, and I pictured the delight the news would give to Madame Pointer. Gladly would I have been the messenger of the welcome tidings, but, after all, it was Bertrand's right: the audition Signor Tonnelli had accorded Eleanor had been of Bertrand's devising.

After a long silence Eleanor spoke. "How glad Bruce will be to hear what Signor Tonnelli said!" she remarked musingly. So that, I reflected, was the home hive to which her thoughts were winging with their freight of honey! "And how excited Aunt Ella will be!" she added, but Aunt Ella was so evidently an afterthought.

An inspiration came to me. "You and your aunt and Mr. Converse will do me the honor of dining with me this evening." It would not be

wise to allow those two young people to be alone at this critical time. I think she was about to dissent, but I added that I would not accept a refusal, and so it was arranged. We dined very well at Lavenue's. Mrs. Crackenby and I had Bruce Converse and Eleanor between us, and we listened to them talking away enthusiastically as only young people can talk when the great door of life is just swinging open to them and they get a glimpse inside and see only the brilliant lights and the friendly throng waiting to receive them. Experience has taught me that nothing rubs out the dull marks of the years so effectively as association with younger and more enthusiastic persons. I am sure, with those two between us talking away so hopefully and confidently and optimistically, Mrs. Crackenby and I, for the time being, left twenty years behind us, hung them up, as it were, with her wrap and my hat behind the door, out of sight, forgotten.

Afterward, we went into the café and heard

Schumacher play on the violin, bringing to life again with his sympathetic mastery ancient favorites, song ghosts of the so long ago, until, along with Eleanor and Bruce and even Mrs. Crackenby, I was humming melodies that I had hummed in my youth. How often in listening to music I have been reminded of the words of Richter: "Thou speakest to me of things which in all my endless life I have not found and shall not find." More than once that evening, I trod familiar fields of asphodel where I once had stood, even as Bruce and Eleanor were standing now, on tiptoe with enthusiastic expectancy.

Ah, the fleeting rapture of youth's dreaming! Forgetful and forgetting, we gaze upon the supernal vision, fondly fancying it can never fade, and suddenly, before we are aware, it is gone. And perhaps, long after, when some Schumacher plays the violin, it comes again to us but only for a moment. Even as we try to fasten its familiar features, searching in the

vague recollection for the charm that once enthralled us, some one leaves the café door ajar and we discover we are sitting in a draught and in danger of catching cold. The fear of draughts is the beginning of old age.

Eleanor startled me out of my reverie by a direct question: "Why so silent, Prince Florimond? Are you composing passages for that mysterious book you are writing?"

They all knew that I was much occupied, just then, with my writing and, for their amusement and my own, I pretended always to make a great secret of it. I met her teasing glance with oracular solemnity. "Whole pages," I replied, adding with more truth than she could guess, "largely about you; you are the heroine."

To please me she clasped her hands in affected delight. "And do you make me a wonderful great singer?"

"Could anything else be possible, Mademoiselle?"

We heard Schumacher play on the violin

She bowed her acknowledgment. "And am I very happy and does it all end well?"

"Would I dare have it otherwise?"

"Am I, oh, madly, passionately in love?"

Her questions were cornering me quite closely. Bruce Converse came unintentionally to my rescue. "Haven't you put me in it?" he asked.

Mrs. Crackenby shot at him a quick glance that I fancied held suspicion. "The prince isn't going to have it a silly love-story, I am sure," she asserted, addressing her remarks to Eleanor. "He will make it a story of a great singer whose head isn't filled with sentimental nonsense about marriage and love. Singers, if they want to be famous, have enough to do if they will think only of their singing."

"Aunt Ella, one would imagine you were a man-hater. Can't a woman be a great singer and be in love, too?"

"She can not." Mrs. Crackenby settled the question in a way that left no room for doubt.

"Of course she can." It was Bruce Converse who spoke. "I beg your pardon for contradicting you, Aunt Ella, but—" he smiled, "you're wrong."

"Don't 'aunt' me, young man," Mrs. Crackenby flashed back. "I know what I'm talking about. If a young woman, or a young man either, wishes to succeed as a singer, or a painter, they must attend strictly to business. They have no time to be thinking about love. Huh! Love! The idea!"

Mrs. Crackenby had the failing of many ladies: she could never long allow an argument to remain impersonal. Eleanor's face grew distinctly rosy but Bruce Converse, who so frequently blushed, showing that, after all, he was not much more than a boy despite his stature, now remained calm under Mrs. Crackenby's scornful gaze. He was acting very well, I thought, and showed excellent self-possession.

"Now, Aunt Ella," he protested boldly, "if

two young people were in love with each other—"

"'Sh," came from the tables around us; Schumacher was playing again. Converse ceased speaking abruptly but, as he settled himself in his chair, I saw him smile and I am quite sure that I caught a deliberate wink as he glanced at Eleanor.

After I left them that night, I took a roundabout way to my home, skirting the silent barred gardens to the broad Rue de Tournon and thence, by the Rue de Seine, to the river, then southward again, pondering all the while upon the question that had been raised so inadvertently at Lavenue's and which had occupied the thoughts of several of us since first our plot was formed. Is Art, as Bertrand de Volney contends, such a jealous mistress that those whom she favors most highly must serve her alone? If one must choose between Art and Love which is to be the sacrifice? Do great artists live in a world apart,

so far removed that the laws governing other human beings do not apply to them? Is their genius incapable of satisfying itself with that passion which, to humbler individuals, makes even the commonplace beautiful?

Until late that night, I sought some satisfactory answer among the philosophers, among those who are dead, gone and almost forgotten, and among those who can never die, who always live close to our thoughts, as though they had spoken only yesterday, revealing life for us.

I grew discouraged that from them no real answer was to be found. Love had been a theme for many of them, nearly all, and not a few had bent their great minds to the analysis of Art, but nowhere were the two to be found together. Art and Love; Love and Art. Had not one of the philosophers endeavored to reconcile the conflict? Must these two great forces of life be considered as opposed? These dual incentives that, apart, have brought harmony to the world, must they, together, pro-

duce only discord? I do not speak of those little loves that are born of a transitory desire for companionship and that one may put off or on, like a familiar garment, a thing for our comfort. The love that might measure its power with Art would not be of that kind; it would be a great absorbing Passion that reached out to the skies and beyond, up to the stars, embracing all, holding the world, the universe, life, death, within its grasp, as eternal as Truth, as everlasting and as beautiful as Art, which is Truth.

I knew that Love would mean all this to Eleanor Moore and to Bruce Converse, as well. No little, make-shift, apologetic, temporizing, substituting affection would enmesh them. Their love would be either a great tragedy, pulling down the temple on itself, killing, destroying, annihilating, or a supreme joy, celestial in its completeness, perfect in its compensation, bringing happiness that even the high gods might envy.

It was the next day that I gave myself the pleasure of seeing Madame Pointer, but I was not to enjoy conversing with her, uninterruptedly, regarding our friends. Mr. Spaulding Knapp was at the villa when I arrived, and he and Madame Pointer were so deeply engrossed in the project for some entertainment in the near future that they must at once take me into their plans.

"Mr. Knapp has grown restless and wishes to be sailing for America," she explained. "It has been with the greatest difficulty I have persuaded him it is his patriotic duty to celebrate the Fourth of July on land, instead of on the sea, and he has consented to remain over to be one of our party. Of course you will give us the pleasure of your company as a good American — will you not — Prince de Saint-Sauveur. Please do so."

I could only bow my acknowledgment, for Mr. Knapp exclaimed enthusiastically: "Yes, Prince, I have agreed to stay over if Leslie

will have a regular old-fashioned spread-eagle Fourth."

Now I did not know what it was, this spread of the eagle Fourth, and so I asked him to explain. He only laughed. "You must wait and see. It can not be described."

It was all arranged, and I assisted with their planning. Our little company of friends was to be at Madame Pointer's on the occasion of the national holiday: De Volney and Bruce Converse and Eleanor and Mrs. Crackenby and Signor Tonnelli, if he should be still in France, and the three young gentlemen who were studying art, and Madame Pointer's mother, who was expected from America. There was to be a dinner under the trees and speeches and fireworks, but, still, I could not learn what it was, this spreading of the eagle. Madame Pointer and Mr. Knapp laughed a great deal about that.

When we had exhausted the subject of the celebration and were all in a very good humor

about it, the talk turned to Eleanor Moore and Bruce Converse. Mr. Knapp appeared to be informed of the plot that had been devised, for after Madame Pointer had congratulated me and thanked me very gracefully for the small part I had taken, that surprising Mr. Knapp cast a damper upon our spirits by sounding a warning.

"Be careful, Leslie," he cautioned, "or those you seek to befriend will only hate you for your trouble."

He was so solemn that we both laughed, for he could not be aware that the plot was progressing so smoothly and well, and that Eleanor and Bruce Converse were entirely happy, their thoughts occupied with the glorious work each intended to perform. We knew their content to be so complete, and we felt such a just pleasure in what we had been able to do for them, that Mr. Knapp's unexpected attitude provoked only our merriment. He would not admit his error, for he was, I

think, an obstinate man, but he turned the talk into other channels, and soon after, pleading the need of exercise, left us, and we could see him walking on the winding shaded road that led up to the villa, his sturdy figure swinging along briskly, his short strides giving the impression of activity, his heels descending sharply upon the gravel road as if, even in his exercise, his nature showed itself to be aggressive.

"I was not aware Monsieur Knapp was so timid," I remarked with a smile, as I observed Madame Pointer also regarding him.

"Spaulding has become a true sentimentalist," she confided. "It must be the effect of your wonderful France, Prince Florimond."

That made me very gay. "Ah, Madame, France is wonderful, but even it can not convert your cold, practical business man into a sentimentalist. There must be some other cause."

I was amused by the idea, but Madame

Pointer was serious. "You must not laugh at him too much," she urged, and I thought I detected a note of pity in her voice. "Spaulding Knapp is not so cold and practical as you may think."

"Laugh at him, my dear Madame Pointer! I honor him all the more."

"Ah, but you do laugh at him, even though you would wish not to. Some day, it may be that I will tell you —" She was speaking as if in a reverie, and as if the words had escaped her without her willing it, for she paused abruptly, shaking her head.

"Some day —" I urged, for I was quite curious as to what she had been about to say.

"No; I can not tell you, even 'some day,' but I wish you to know, Prince Florimond, that Spaulding Knapp has been my good friend for many years. I have sought his advice and help in sorrow and suffering, and I may, at times, have appeared to him cruelly ungrateful, but

he has never failed me. He is the stanchest friend I have ever known."

I bowed my head. "Madame, there are men who would give all they possess to be honored by such a tribute from you."

It may have been fancy, but I thought that when Mr. Knapp returned she treated him with added tenderness. Her remarks, and the disclosure she had seemed about to make and had not made, persisted in my memory. I began to see affairs in another light. Strange that never before had I regarded Mr. Spaulding Knapp as her suitor, but now it seemed clear; otherwise, why should he who gave himself so little leisure, and who was known for his slavish attention to his business, absent himself from those affairs and remain so long in Europe? I confess I should not have considered him the type of man that would be attractive as a suitor to such a lady as Madame Pointer, but are there many women who would

not find irresistible the combination of a kind generous heart and a colossal fortune?

Madame Pointer urged him very cordially to remain for dinner and the invitation was extended to me. We were persuaded, without much difficulty, to accept, and had a charming dinner served on the veranda by candlelight. Afterward, we sat about the table, Monsieur Knapp smoking his big cigars and I my cigarettes, until the moon rose and the nightingales began singing in the trees near us, filling the warm night with their music, to which we listened silently.

When I arrived at my home that night, Gaspard was waiting up to tell me that the Vicomte de Volney had called and wished urgently to see me. He would return the next morning.

A remarkable part of life is, I think, not that we have so little faith but that we have so much. It is of the commonest experience that what we were most sure of turns out to be

the opposite of what we had considered it to be. We become certain of one thing, only to discover it is another. All our lives long, from the first moments of cognition, we are being deceived and undeceived — which is sometimes the more cruel of the two — but we go on, in spite of this, placing complete reliance in the testimony of our senses; we go on believing that what seems to be true is true.

Not one of us had doubted that Bruce Converse and Eleanor were so occupied with their work, and that their minds were so completely filled with the careers opening so auspiciously for them, that there no longer existed any danger that they would shipwreck the hopes we had formed for them by dashing themselves upon rocks we had, with such pains, caused them to avoid. Bertrand, when he came to my house the next morning, shattered that confidence in a sentence.

"Miss Moore will not sign the contract with Tonnelli," he announced. "She says it is be-

cause of Karylli; that she does not wish to appear ungrateful. Can you believe that such is the real motive?"

I agreed with him that it was most unlikely. "She puts him off without a definite answer until his patience is becoming exhausted," Bertrand continued, speaking rapidly. "No, the real reason is that she does not want to leave Paris as long as Bruce Converse is here. And as for Converse! He is no longer painting landscapes. I have been to his studio. He is again at work on that miserable portrait. The truth is, Florimond, they have fallen more deeply in love than ever. We have worked blindly. Now it may be too late, but whatever can be done must be done, at once."

I waited. De Volney was not one to lack ideas, and presently he outlined the plan he had formed. Tonnelli, who was as much set as we were upon having Eleanor go away, was to force her decision by a sort of ultimatum; Madame

Pointer was to lose no time in going to the château she had taken near Fontainebleau, and she was to invite Converse to be her guest there; her invitation would be one that he could not well decline. Thus were Eleanor and Bruce Converse to be separated.

We went to see Madame Pointer that morning. She was alarmed at the state of affairs De Volney described, and readily consented to do her part. To me was assigned the pleasant rôle of entertainer to Eleanor and Mrs. Crackenby, devising invitations that should consume a good deal of Eleanor's leisure. Bertrand was to fill a similar office in regard to Mr. Converse. Between us we made quite an elaborate plot. We became true conspirators. But would we succeed? We all felt that exquisite doubt which must come to every schemer as the moment approaches when his carefully conceived plot is to be put to the test.

CHAPTER XI

WE ASSIST AT A PLAY THAT HAS A HAPPY ENDING

IT was a day of radiant perfection, such a day as the responding soul would embrace and hold forever. The sunshine was tempered by the occasional passing of light cumulous clouds and a constant fresh breeze that was not boisterous enough to annoy but sufficiently strong to add life to the landscape by setting the tree-tops to dancing and starting endless trains of pursuing ripples upon the surface of lake and river. An atmosphere of holiday, a sentiment of the Sabbath such as one often observes in nature, spread over city and country. As I rode on my way to attend that celebration at the home of Madame Pointer, when I should learn of the spread of the eagle, I observed

that many of the houses lining the avenues were closed, and I suddenly realized that the season, as we know it in Paris, was ended; the butterfly of fashion that spreads its wings so early had taken flight. The observation occasioned surprise, for, so swiftly had the days passed, I was unaware the summer was already so advanced.

We were to dine early because of the fireworks that were to follow, and I arrived at the villa an hour before the appointed time, but already the fête appeared to be in progress, for even from the roadside I heard voices singing a patriotic song and I had no difficulty in distinguishing the vocal efforts of Mr. Sammy Potts, Mr. Amos Tuttle and Mr. Johnny Judd. They were endeavoring to compensate for their lack of technical training by fervor of expression. Unhappily for their patriotic intentions, they could not remember the words. No doubt they welcomed the diversion caused by my arrival.

Madame Pointer presented me to her mother, Madame Worthing, who had arrived in France the day before, a lovely and lovable old lady with snow-white hair framing features as regular as those of her daughter. How few old ladies, nowadays, have snow-white hair, and how delightful it is to find such a one who has grown old so gracefully that she had lost none of her interest in life! I have in mind, as I write, another lady as lovely and beautiful as Madame Worthing — my own beloved Aunt Fanny — and, probably, you, too, are in the possession of such a memory. Mr. Spaulding Knapp had been at the villa all the afternoon aiding in arranging the celebration, and De Volney had come early to be of service, so I found them both there when I arrived. Eleanor and Mrs. Crackenby came soon after, and with them was Signor Tonnelli. Bruce Converse joined the party later. He had been painting near the villa, and showed us the sketch he had made, a sunny sweep of fields

with a line of Lombardy poplars in the foreground, which was greatly admired by us all.

Over the gathering was that spirit of informal jollity that is a part of what the English call picnics and which we of France have endeavored vainly to imitate. Laughing, talking, those who had come to take part in the celebration formed now a great group with all listening to one person; now small groups of three or four and sometimes only two, all meeting and parting again and changing like the colored bits of glass in a kaleidoscope. Bertrand and I had the opportunity for a conversation apart. We were both, I think, more than a little excited by the knowledge that this evening would probably prove crucial as far as the plans we had formed were concerned.

Signor Tonnelli had not yet delivered the threatened ultimatum, failing to agree with our opinion that such a course would be wise. He declined to precipitate matters as long as

the possibility existed of Eleanor acting as was desired upon her own initiative.

"My experience teach me," he explained, "that when any one try to force a woman to decide against her will, she will decide the way he does not wish." But Signor Tonnelli was leaving for San Sebastian in a day or two, and Eleanor's answer could not be delayed much longer.

Madame Pointer had also postponed her invitation to Bruce Converse. In talking it over we had agreed that the present celebration would be an excellent occasion. Madame Pointer and her mother were departing from Paris as soon as they could, and there would not be much time for Mr. Converse to consider the invitation. He would, indeed, be forced to give his answer at once.

I had seen Eleanor and Bruce Converse several times recently, and my observation told me that De Volney's fears were not without reason. The two had plainly passed that

stage of admiration which Stendhal characterizes as the first step in love, and had rapidly progressed to what the author of *L'Amour* considers the fifth degree, the beginning of the first crystallization, that unmeasurable period of exaltation when "It is only necessary to think of a perfection to discover it in the person one loves."

As Bertrand and I talked over these things, the scene before us changed. Darkness had begun, and under the trees appeared round glowing lights of orange and green and red and yellow, like full moons of many colors. So ingeniously had the lanterns been placed, I had not observed them until they thus suddenly burst forth in their brilliance.

The dinner was served in a bower near the villa. At one end of the long table was Madame Pointer and at the other Mr. Spaulding Knapp, who took an undisguised delight in the proceedings. Never had I known him before to exhibit so much of that vivacity of interest

in trivial matters that demonstrates one has the heart still young. He acted as director of the feast, spurring each one to conversation and laughter. I will not say that I have assisted at no other dinner where there was so much to interest, but I will say that never have I been present at a dinner when there was more of merriment. Nor can I recall why it was that all of us laughed so much, but I have never had much patience with those philosophers who seek to analyze too closely the secret of our laughter. We should be content that we can laugh without thinking too much about the reason why we are amused.

When the dinner was at an end, Mr. Knapp announced that there would be speeches and that each one would be expected to say something appropriate to the day. He would begin, he said, and turning to me, as he pushed his chair back with ceremony, he remarked: "Prince, you will now kindly observe how that eagle is spread."

Although most attentively I listened, I can not describe to you that speech or tell you what he said. It is beyond my powers. I had not before heard anything like it. With an expression of great solemnity, Mr. Spaulding Knapp poured forth so many rolling high-sounding words that I grew confused. Often was he interrupted, at some particularly sonorous sentence, by cries of "Hip, hip, hooray!" from the three young art students, and each time, Mr. Knapp gravely bowed his appreciation, as the others added their applause.

Madame Pointer, at whose right I had the honor of being placed, turned to me with tears of laughter in her eyes. "He used to do that to amuse us when he was a young man just beginning to take an interest in political affairs," she whispered to me; and Bruce Converse, who sat opposite, and who had been laughing more heartily than I had ever seen him laugh, leaned across the table to say:

"You might not believe it, but I have heard political orators make almost identically the same speech."

When Mr. Knapp had concluded, with a great flourish, his remarkable oration, he bowed to the applause, and as he took his seat, called to me at the other end of the table, with a twinkle in his eye: "Now, Prince, do you understand what it is, the spread of the eagle?"

"I am not altogether sure," I answered, "but I think I have obtained an inkling," which caused them all to laugh again.

No one could make a speech like Mr. Knapp. Ah, no, that was not to be expected, but each one said something very well indeed, I thought, and last of all, Eleanor sang one of those songs that all English speaking people know the world over, and we joined her in singing the chorus.

The *feu d'artifice* was all that Mr. Knapp had promised. He had been true to his word, and had found, where I do not know, what he

called "real American fireworks," which made a pretty show in the park. Grouped at a little distance from them, we watched the rockets and bombs and colored fires, with exclamations of delight. We were in the part of the park most distant from the villa, and when the exhibition was ended and we turned to make our way to the house, our eyes had looked so long upon the brilliant display that it seemed very dark under the big trees. So obscure was the walk that Eleanor, who was beside me, took my arm. We could hear in front of us the laughter of the others without seeing them, except when one, or another, would pass for a moment under a suspended lantern.

Madame Pointer and Bruce Converse were a few yards in advance of us, and as we neared the villa we observed them pause under a red lantern, the candle of which was sputtering. They were talking excitedly. Suddenly, Madame Pointer held out her hand to the young painter, who seized it fervently.

"It is agreed, then," we heard her cry jubilantly. "You will come with us. I have your promise?"

"My promise!" he replied gaily. "You have my eternal gratitude."

"Splendid!" and she shook his hand warmly, as they passed, laughing, out from under the reflection of the lantern and were hidden in the darkness.

I felt Eleanor's arm tighten upon my own, and I thought I heard her sigh, but I was probably mistaken, for she had been silent, almost *triste*, I had thought; but, now, she began talking with animation of the beauty of the fireworks and of the merriment of the dinner, and she was still talking when we came to the villa, where the others were already making their farewells. It was while we were thus engaged that Madame Pointer, announcing that she would leave the villa within a few days to go with her mother to the château they had taken near Fontainebleau, told us that Bruce

Converse was to visit them there, where he would have close at hand the landscapes that inspired Millet and Corot and all that glorious little band. She was very happy, and urged all of us to come to the château if we could, and Mr. Sammy Potts, Mr. Amos Tuttle and Mr. Johnny Judd said they would surely accept the invitation during the summer that they might see how closely Bruce Converse approached the masters on their own ground. They were very proud of him.

"And I hope that you will come to make us a visit, too," said Madame Pointer to Signor Tonnelli, as she gave him her hand in parting.

"Ah, Madame, it is not possible." He shook his head with lugubrious exaggeration. "You are verra kind, but, no, it is not possible. I shall be so far away. I shall be sad. You are all so verra happy here. Only me, the poor impresario, I am not happy. Mees Moore, she has not said she will sign the contract I make for her. I find a younga lady with a most

beautiful voice; I want to make her a great prima donna, and she will not let me."

He shook his head again, and the little man seemed quite pathetic as he related his misfortune. We all looked from him to Eleanor. Her head was thrown slightly back, her lips pressed tightly together until they made only a thin straight line, and her eyes seemed to have changed from blue to black. There was something almost defiant in her attitude as she faced Signor Tonnelli.

"I am ready to sign," she said without a tremor.

He could not believe her. "Ready, ah, yes," he repeated ironically, "but when?"

"When you wish. Now, if you like."

"You mean it?"

"Yes."

Like a magician, the little impresario took from his pocket the contract, and with another gesture that reminded one more and more of the tricks men perform upon the stage, he

produced a pen, and very quickly unscrewing the cap, placed the pen and the paper in Eleanor's hands.

"We have a celebration, too, eh?" he exclaimed. We could all see how excited he was, though he tried hard to appear natural.

Eleanor was as calm as the night itself. "Where?" was all she asked as she spread the paper open upon a table at her side.

"There, there," cried Signor Tonnelli, putting one of his fat little hands at the bottom of the sheet. "You sign there." We could see his finger shaking, but Eleanor wrote her name quite deliberately and handed the paper back to him, as if it were something that had no importance at all.

It seemed as if regaining that bit of paper caused Signor Tonnelli's agitation to disappear. He no longer smiled as I should have thought he would do. "*Grazie*," he said almost curtly. "And when do we leave, Mademoiselle?"

"When you wish," responded Eleanor, as if the matter were not of pressing interest.

"The day after to-morrow, then, we go to Spain."

"As you will."

We had all been watching this scene as one watches a play, but now every one crowded about Eleanor congratulating her. Bruce Converse was among the first.

"It's glorious, Eleanor," he said. "We all know what this will mean."

"Perhaps," she answered vaguely.

"It means that I shall be mighty busy packing," said Mrs. Crackenby. "They decide, on the spur of the moment, to go away to Spain the day after to-morrow without asking me so much as,—'Can you get ready?'" She joined in the laughter that followed her complaint. "I'm not objecting," she said. "If she had listened to me, she would have signed Mr. Tonnelli's contract long ago."

When leave-taking was begun again, Bruce

Converse came to Eleanor's side, but I thought that now there was a constraint in his manner that was not usual. "You are going to give me the pleasure of taking home the prima donna, I hope," he said, smiling somewhat uncertainly.

"Thank you," answered Eleanor with just a touch of formality, "but Prince Florimond has consented to see us home. Please do not trouble."

Pride is a strange tyrant that governs women, says Stendhal. Now, though earlier in the evening I had asked of Eleanor the honor of escorting her and her aunt and Signor Tonnelli back to the city, she had replied indirectly, giving me the impression that she was otherwise engaged. Therefore, I was not a little surprised at what I had heard, but it gave me no less pleasure.

On the way home, Eleanor was in a gay humor. She laughed and talked, and now and then, when the rest of us seemed ready to let a

general silence follow her sprightly conversation, she hummed for Signor Tonnelli bits of operas she wished to study with her new teacher in Spain. It delighted me to see her in such a bright mood, and Mrs. Crackenby gave oral testimony of her appreciation.

"I haven't seen you in such good spirits for I do not know how long, Eleanor," she asserted. "Dear me, not since that tea in Mr. Converse's studio," she added, as if her memory had suddenly come to her aid, in recalling the time when her niece was the embodiment of joyous good-humor.

CHAPTER XII

A GLORIOUS SUMMER IS FOLLOWED BY A DREARY WINTER

LOOKING backward through the minifying lenses of past years is much like regarding the scene through reversed opera-glasses. Time seems to turn the glasses roundabout, so that what once appeared to us as all-important, obscuring everything else, assumes its relative place and we see it as it really was.

Thus, I can see clearly enough, now, that the pleasant party at Madame Pointer's marked for us all the great change, though it seemed at the time merely an enjoyable celebration such as our small company of friends would likely repeat time and again. Within less than a week, Madame Pointer had gone

with her mother to their château, whither Bruce Converse had followed them; Eleanor and Mrs. Crackenby and Signor Tonnelli had departed for Spain, Mr. Spaulding Knapp had embarked for America, De Volney had gone to Trouville and I had taken Gaspard and the other servants with me to my home on the Loire. Even Mr. Judd, Mr. Potts and Mr. Tuttle had left Paris to find inspiration at Pont Aven in Brittany. Alas, it was to be many a long day before we were all reunited!

That summer and autumn were unlike any others I had ever experienced. It may have been due to the abrupt change from the bright and gay company of our friends in Paris, but, for the first time, the solitude of my old home weighed upon me. For years past, when once I was installed in the old château I loved so well, where the very stones seemed like living companions, it had been impossible to persuade me to desert it until the leaves of the great trees in the park were molding on the ground,

but now I was aware of an unpleasant restlessness, and old occupations failed to interest. The country seemed arched over with an indescribable melancholy, as if the sunny skies of the Loire valley had become continually gray.

Three times during that summer, I had pleasant notes from Madame Pointer, asking me to visit them and observe with my own eyes the work of Bruce Converse, which she so enthusiastically described. Upon the second urging, I went. The château she occupied on the edge of the forest of Fontainebleau made an excellent setting for her, harmonizing well with the repose of her character and the serenity of her beauty.

I had barely arrived before she insisted upon my going with her to see the painting Converse was finishing in the forest near the château. With Madame Worthing, who, I soon discovered, fully shared her daughter's admiration for Converse, we set out on foot

along a small path in the woods. We talked of Eleanor — they had received no direct news from her or Mrs. Crackenby, but De Volney, who had been at the château several times, had had two or three letters from Signor Tonnelli and I had had two letters from Eleanor herself, all speaking of the progress she was making under her new master. We talked also of Bertrand de Volney and Paris, but the conversation was almost altogether about Bruce Converse. Why must we be of little minds? Madame Pointer's unstinted praise of the young painter, her undisguised interest in him, caused the suspicion to leap into my mind, for the first time, that her attachment to his art might mask a deeper attachment for the artist. It was a base thought, unworthy of her and of me, but where is the philosopher who can so close all the doors of his mind that an unwelcome thought will not at times come leaping in before he is aware?

The newer work of Bruce Converse certainly

justified all that had been said. It was stronger, surer, maturer, and I found this change reflected in the young man. We came upon him perched on one of those big rocks that scattered through the forest, painting the effect of sunlight upon some young birches. He greeted us with delight, giving me a hearty handshake, and then went on painting, talking as he worked.

"The work seems to fly down here," he said. "Remember that day we came down in your motor? I did not think then I should have a whole summer of it, but my good friends declare they aren't tired of me and I'm staying on." He turned round to smile at Madame Pointer and Madame Worthing. I learned that he intended to go to New York in the fall, and hoped to have an exhibition there of the pictures he was now painting. He asked about Eleanor, was eager to know all I could tell him. "She hasn't written me," he said; "but I suppose she is too busy to write."

It was a very charming week-end that I spent with Madame Pointer and her mother and Bruce Converse, and there was a return visit that I shall long remember when Madame Pointer and Madame Worthing did me the honor to come to my château. Bruce Converse was so deep in his work that he could not leave, but De Volney, who had been with me for a week, made one of the pleasant party. Not in many years have I seen the old place when it was more beautiful. The summer had passed and nature was entering on her loveliest stage, that season of full maturity just before the autumn puts over all the master touch of color. But, now, there was no hint in reddened leaf or yellow grass of decay to instil the melancholy suggestion that all things must fade. The elms and oaks stood, in their green fields, so richly clothed it seemed they must remain forever as they were.

Madame Pointer expressed herself as enchanted. She was much out of doors, and

when in the old house appeared to find an equal pleasure in exploring the great galleries, some of them gloomy enough. The day before they departed I took her entirely over the château from the damp *cave* to the roof upon which knights had ridden their steeds in olden days. Madame Worthing and De Volney had declared the excursion too fatiguing for them and they had remained behind, but Madame Pointer showed not once a sign of weariness. I pointed out to her that door before which my great ancestor, the old Philippe de Saint-Sauveur, had stood, with drawn sword, defying the emissaries of the wicked regent, Queen Catherine, who wished to take from him his young wife, her cousin.

"Go to the queen," he said, "and tell her that my bride rests in this room, but before the door stands Philippe de Saint-Sauveur; and say to her that whoever would enter this room may, but first he must pass through Heaven, or hell, on the point of my sword, that

his soul may be purified before it comes into the presence of my wife."

Madame Pointer looked long at me, as I stood there where my great ancestor had stood and told her the story.

"And did the old prince keep his young bride?" she asked.

"He did, Madame, and she was happy. I am the last of their blood."

"How you must love this old place!" she exclaimed.

"Every stone," I answered proudly. "Were it possible for them to become more dear to me, they have become so this day because you have touched them." She smiled at me and was silent during the rest of our excursion.

The next day they were gone, all together, for Bertrand took himself off with them, though I urged him to stay longer.

"You are too melancholy here in your lonely state for me, Florimond," he had answered

laughingly, and I began to think he might be right.

I was not slow in accepting the next invitation of Madame Pointer, but I regret now that I went, for I found among the party that detestable Duc de Mirabelle, who gave himself the airs of an old friend and followed Madame Pointer everywhere. For the life of me I could not be civil to him, and I left for my home a day earlier than I had intended, conscious that I had acquitted myself rather badly. From that time on, nothing could drag me from my château, and to Madame Pointer's two letters again inviting me, I replied evasively, for I knew I could not keep my temper should I again encounter that adventurer in her presence.

It was early in October that I received from Paris a letter in which Madame Pointer informed me she was sailing the next day for America with her mother and Mr. Converse. The exhibition of his paintings had been ar-

ranged and would be held during the winter. Her letter was enthusiastic in its prophecies of his success, and at the end was a word of farewell that deeply touched me.

"Somehow, this time my going seems a most serious undertaking," she wrote. "I feel in quitting Paris, more than I have ever felt before, that I am leaving behind good friends and putting a wide ocean between us. But I try to banish regret by thinking of my return. We plan to be here in the spring. I am sorry not to have seen you again to say good-by and to thank you once more for those perfect days at your home. I feel that I have insufficiently expressed my gratitude for all you have done to make this visit to France the most enjoyable I have yet known, but take the intention for the deed, my good friend, and know that I shall not soon forget your kindness. *Au revoir et merci!* The Vicomte de Volney once told me that expression was perilously near slang, but I can not bring

myself to write 'Good-by,' and I must thank you."

There was nothing to take me back to Paris, so that I remained in the country until after the new year, shut up for the most time in the house before a log fire, for it was cold and rainy. I never remember such a winter. Paris, when at last I returned to it, was as gray as a monk's cowl. It rained or snowed nearly every day, more snow than I can recall since the winters of my boyhood when it seemed there was always snow. The sun shone rarely, and if it peeped for a moment from between the gray curtains people looked at it in wonder. I rarely went farther from my home than the *quais*, where I would talk with the shivering old *bouquinistes* who stood in front of their book-stalls like starved birds, waiting before their cages for some one to come and feed them.

Bertrand de Volney astonished me by going to America. He would have had me go with

him but the journey was too long. He wished to see the exhibition of Bruce Converse, and he wrote me long letters of the success that the pictures were having, sending me clippings from the newspapers with praise that would have been enough to turn Converse's head. He was being hailed as the greatest of American painters. Indeed, echoes of Converse's success reached me through the *Figaro*, the *Herald* and through a long appreciative article in the *Revue des Arts*. I had several letters, too, from Madame Pointer, recounting the same things and giving me entertaining details of her life in America. She wrote most interesting letters.

And then, just as the long winter was at its end, and a belated spring was turning the world green again, came the joyous news that they were returning to Paris.

CHAPTER XIII

GOSSIP ABOUT A NEW PRIMA DONNA STIRS EVERY ONE EXCEPT SIGNOR TONNELLI

ELEANOR MOORE — our Eleanor — was to make her début at a great gala evening at the Opera, and before a visiting sovereign, during the *Grande Semaine*.

Only the magician Tonnelli could have brought such a thing to pass. Only he, who moved with such quickness and sureness, could have decided and made the others decide to trust the success of so important an event to a young girl who had never sung in public before. Ah, but had she not? The truth came out about that much later, but then it was Eleanor's secret, Eleanor's and Signor Tonnelli's, and, of course, Mrs. Crackenby's; only

they knew that, under another name, she had sung in the opera-houses of Madrid and Rome and Milan, yes, even that very part of Juliette which she was to sing before the king.

You who know the self-satisfied critics of Paris can imagine how hostile they were when it was announced that, without so much as consulting them, an unknown singer had been chosen. It was not to be permitted. They would have torn her to little pieces with their sharp pens. Was she Italian? Was she Spanish? Was she "one of those Americans?" No one knew. That was the very trouble. She was *unknown*. The enraged critics attacked the management of the Opera, and each critic having in mind the prima donna he would have preferred for such an honor, waged a warfare that extended at last to the politicians, who, alas, so often take part in the affairs of our unhappy Opera. They said one thing was certain: the new singer was *not* French, and the occasion demanded that the

king should be entertained not only by a French prima donna but by the greatest prima donna France could offer. The king was known all over Europe as a patron of music; if the gala night were a failure he would cherish a just resentment, yes, he would quite properly be offended, and the consequences might be serious, for delicate questions were pending with the government of that sovereign; France might suffer.

It was thus they argued, and one polemist was so scurrilous in his attacks upon Eleanor that I was on the point of sending my witnesses to the offender, but the Vicomte de Volney got ahead of me and neatly ran his sword through the scribbler's right arm, so that he did not write with much comfort for a long time after.

Opposed to all the politicians and the critics, was little Signor Tonnelli, and little Signor Tonnelli was very happy. The critics angrily demanded of him information concerning his protégée, but, smiling, he refused. "She is

the mos' wonderful singer of to-day. Tonnelli tell you so. You will yourself say so." That is all he would say to them. They asked for more. "Is it not enough?" he inquired, still smiling.

The directors of the Opera hid behind Tonnelli. They would never have admitted it, but it was true that he could have taken away from them their best singers. They did not tell this, but said they trusted to the judgment of Signor Tonnelli, whose fame as an impresario was known even to the king himself.

Poor Eleanor! During all this time she was forced to hide herself. I received a note from her that had been sent from Saint-Germain. I went to see her at once. She was in a villa overlooking the valley of the Seine. It was Mrs. Crackenby who betrayed the most emotion.

"I am expecting every day to find the French army at the gate," she avowed.

Eleanor was changed. I can not tell you

how except that some of that boyishness seemed to have departed. She was exceedingly calm. The storming of the critics, the curiosity of the public seemed not to affect her.

"Signor Tonnelli tells us but little," she explained, "and Aunt Ella does not dare to grapple with the French newspapers, but, notwithstanding, we have heard something of the threats they are making against poor Signor Tonnelli. It would be terrible if he were worried by them, but he does not mind them at all."

She did not appear sad, but the gaiety that was formerly in her smile was no longer there, and though she was a little slenderer and that made her seem even younger, in her conversation and in her conduct she appeared considerably older than when she went away. With no trace of embarrassment she asked about Bruce Converse. He was in Paris, she had heard. How was he doing? She had been told that he had had great success in America; she had received several letters from

him while he was there, and she had read some of the highly laudatory notices of the critics in regard to his work exhibited in the Old Salon in the spring.

"Would you like me to give him your address?" I asked, with the intention of discovering if this frankness were indifference, or merely the concealment of a deep interest.

"No, no," she said so quickly that she blushed in trying to regain her former attitude of tranquillity. "I think he has it already," she confessed. "I wrote him from Italy that this villa had been taken for us, but he must be very busy. Besides, I have not the time myself to see many friends, for I must work hard every day, and when I am not working I must rest. Signor Tonnelli makes me follow a very strict régime. Really, I am a prisoner in a cage."

"And Bertrand de Volney?" I asked.

"Yes, I must see 'Is 'Ighness." She smiled at the old name that hardly any one used now.

I had not heard it for nearly a year and had almost forgotten it. "I intended to ask you to beg him to come out here to see me."

"And Madame Pointer?" I suggested.

She shook her head. "Not yet. After my début. You will explain to her, will you not? She will understand. I really would prefer to wait until afterward."

Now there was something in all this that eluded me, that baffled my desire to analyze it, and yet it left me far from convinced that Eleanor Moore was as tranquil as she appeared. My conscience troubled me, and when Bertrand had been to see her I went to him to unburden my mind.

"See here, Bertrand," I began at once, "now that you have seen her, do you think that she is still in love?"

"Do women unhappily in love, talk so freely of him who has caused their suffering?" he asked.

"I have known women," I answered, "and,

indeed, you have also, undoubtedly, who forced themselves to face boldly their chagrin, and who would not let themselves hide the subject that was painful to them. I have known other women who fed upon their martyrdom, as it were, voluntarily turning the knife in the wound."

De Volney smiled confidently. He put his hands in his pockets and stood up before me. "Let your conscience rest quietly, Florimond. If Miss Moore is in love, it is with an idea, not with Bruce Converse, for the Bruce Converse of the studio in the Rue d'Assas whom she knew hardly exists any more. It was another Bruce Converse who came back from America. If you are not convinced I am right, you should go to see him; it is really your duty to go, for you have not called upon him since he returned."

It was true. I had seen the young painter several times at Madame Pointer's, and we had had déjeuner together — Converse, Bertrand

and I — but I had not been to see him in the new studio he had rented in the Parc Monceau Quarter. So I went. There were two ladies in the studio when I arrived. Converse presented me. They were American ladies, evidently recent acquaintances, and they talked of his pictures, standing before them and repeating those phrases persons who know little of art employ, phrases that seem to express so much and mean nothing. Converse accepted their flattery politely, but I think he was glad when they left. I could see a shade of relief in his manner.

"Prospective purchasers," he explained, with just a touch of apology in his intonation. He was wearing his painter's blouse, and once we were alone, he took up his palette and brushes again and resumed his painting where he had been interrupted by the arrival of his visitors.

"You don't mind my going on working? Sit here where you can see it. How do you

like it? Tell me what you think of it. I can listen and talk and paint, too."

We talked of many things. Yes, De Volney was right, as he nearly always was. Bruce Converse had changed. He had grown very sure of himself. He knew quite well now what he wanted to do and he intended to do it; there was no troubling question of possible failure. Purposely, I brought the name of Eleanor into our conversation, mentioning that I had paid her a visit. Converse stopped his painting suddenly.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "Is she here? I got a letter from her from Italy saying that she and her aunt were to arrive in a fortnight to take a villa somewhere — somewhere — where was it?" He searched his memory. I did not aid him. He laid aside his palette and began rummaging in an inlaid mahogany desk that went very well with the luxuriousness of the new studio. "Ah, here it is." He glanced at the date. "May twenty-eighth; what day

is it now? June twentieth. By Jove! I had no idea it had been so long. How time flies when one is busy!" He was reading the letter. "Ah! 'Aunt Ella and I have taken a villa in Saint-Germain. We expect to be there in two weeks or less.' Here is the address. I must go to see them at once. I had no idea they had arrived."

He did in fact go, not the next day, but the day after, but I learned that he had sacrificed his time to small purpose, for at the end of the long journey he found only Mrs. Crackenby. Eleanor was not at home.

"*Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis*" is one of the oldest and perhaps the truest of proverbs. Fortunate are we if, even after the lapse of a short time, we can find our friends and circumstances the same as when they so delighted us. I had looked forward to another summer of pleasant, congenial, amusing company such as the last summer had been, but it was quite different. Converse and Eleanor

were not the only ones who had changed. Even Mr. Sammy Potts and Mr. Johnny Judd and Mr. Amos Tuttle showed the marks of the year that had passed. They were no longer "afflicted with too much Trilby"; their costumes had become almost like the costumes of other mortals; Tuttle had exhibited a very successful picture in the Salon des Beaux Arts; Judd had been no less successful with a painting of the sea at Concarneau which had won him a third medal in the Old Salon; Mr. Sammy Potts was an out-and-out "*Indépendant*" and retained in his manner of dress a reminiscence of former eccentricity, but he was still very young and it was more than probable that he would change with time as the others had changed. Thus, the three friends who had bound themselves with an oath never to part company had gone their separate ways in the broad field of art. It was the way of life.

Madame Pointer had not changed, but circumstances had changed around her. She was

the same supremely lovely person she had always been; indeed, I think she was one of those rare beings who approach so close to perfection that they attain something of that unchangeableness we associate with unworldly things. No, she had not changed, but her occupations and interests were no longer exactly the same. She had taken a place in town, a sunny inviting apartment at the entrance to the Avenue du Bois, the first house to the left, and there I often had the pleasure of seeing her and her mother, Mrs. Worthing, who was again with her; but there was no longer a plot on foot to unite our interests or to render an excuse for very frequent visits. There was no plot because there was no longer any need for plotting. All of us, I think, felt that our part had been done and well done. Not that she was any the less interested in the careers of Bruce Converse and Eleanor; I believe she was even more interested, but they were both now so far advanced on the road to success

that we were no longer in a position to help them.

"How splendidly it has turned out!" Madame Pointer said to me on one occasion when we were alone. "It was the Vicomte de Volney's plot, of course, but I think we all have reason to feel pleased and proud."

She had many friends in the city, and was occupied a great deal with them, but she had by no means forgotten her friends of the summer before. With characteristic loyalty, she had planned a reunion of those friends on the evening Eleanor would make her début at the Opera. She had engaged three loges, and we gained much pleasure in going over the list of those she wished to be her guests.

"You must look up those three interesting boys from the Latin Quarter," she said to me. "It would not do for them not to be there, and I have written Spaulding Knapp, urging him to leave his business and come over. He never disappoints me, so we can count on

him. Mr. Converse will be with us, of course, and you and the Vicomte de Volney; and I have written to Signor Tonnelli, or rather I got the Vicomte de Volney to write, asking him and Miss Moore and her aunt to join us after her part of the performance. It will be a real reunion."

You see, she had not changed. She was always thinking of how to give pleasure to others, inspired by unselfishness and charity, two of the noblest virtues a woman can possess.

It was this quality of charity that was imposed upon by that miserable Mirabelle. Madame Pointer, who would not have wounded the feelings of any one, continued to receive him, and presuming upon this, he had squirmed himself into a position of apparent friendship with her, calling at her home oftener than ever. I had said all that I could say on the subject, but that this scheming ingratiating snake of a man was allowed to crawl into her saintly presence enraged me. I determined not to speak to

Bertrand about it, for he would have been quick to take the matter into his own hands, but I decided to find a way in which to rid her of his attentions. The opportunity came in good season.

CHAPTER XIV

IN WHICH SWORDS ARE CROSSED

IT was at Auteuil on the day of the *Prix des Drags*. I had desired to escort Madame Pointer to witness this race, which to my mind is the most delightful of all our races, but I learned with regret that she was already engaged for the day. I was standing with Bertrand and another friend, the Marquis de Villejust, watching the brilliant scene, regarding with interest the many mail coaches arrive, when the four well-known grays of a very wealthy American gentleman swung into the field by us. On the second seat was Madame Pointer, looking more beautiful than I had ever seen her. By her side was that insupportable Duc de Mirabelle.

Madame Pointer recognized us and bowed, and we lifted our hats, but I turned away quickly, for that Mirabelle was bowing, too, and smiling with incredible familiarity. The knowledge that it was this upstart who had robbed me of the pleasure of showing our *Prix des Drags* to Madame Pointer was more than I could endure tranquilly. I was still in this mood when the man himself, with his unfailing effrontery, appeared before me smiling triumphantly.

"I say, my dear Prince," he began, with an affected drawl, "our good friend, Madame Pointer, tells me this wonderful new singer we are to hear at the Opera to-morrow night and of whom all Paris is talking is a great friend of yours, indeed, something of a protégée. Do tell us about her — unless" — he paused, feigning an embarrassment foreign to his character — "unless I am asking something indiscreet."

His familiarity, the public proclamation of

Madame Pointer as his friend, and the insinuation of his last words, sent a red-hot iron of indignation through me. "Monsieur de Mirabelle"— and I regarded him with cold contempt, declining as I had always done to accord him the title he assumed —"if the charity of American ladies causes them to tolerate your insolence, it is not so with gentlemen of France. There can be no question concerning my friends that I wish to discuss with you."

I must confess the adventurer played his game with a high hand. He drew himself up to his full stature. "Perhaps a discussion of another nature, where our steel can speak a common language, would be more agreeable to Monsieur de Saint-Sauveur. You shall not lack your opportunity to decide."

Lifting his hat ceremoniously to those with me, he left us, and as if to add to his affront, was soon again on the coach talking gaily to Madame Pointer. I made no doubt I should soon receive his seconds, and I requested Ber-

trand and the Marquis de Villejust to act for me, urging them to expedite the affair as much as possible, for, as Bertrand was aware, I wished the matter, which was sure to get out, to be settled before Eleanor's début the next evening. It was arranged that afternoon that we should meet early the next morning on the property of the Marquis de Villejust in the Vallée de Chevreuse.

The sun had just risen when I rode away from my home with the Vicomte de Volney. Old Gaspard suspected what was up, I am sure, for he was very nervous and more than usually solemn.

"God guard my master," he said as we drove off.

Mirabelle was on the ground when we arrived. We lost no time in removing our coats for the encounter at arms. When I saw him standing there, still insolent in his self-possession, I determined that I would use my skill to inflict upon him such a humiliation as would

take from him some of this assurance. From the time I was able to handle a rapier I had been devoted to the practise of *l'escrime*, and confident of my superiority over this upstart, I felt certain that, once we crossed swords and he felt himself at my mercy, his attitude of arrogance and bluff would disappear and he would show himself the craven.

No sooner had the *directeur de combat* placed us at the regulation distance and released our swords with "*Allez, Messieurs*," than I advanced toward my adversary with a violent twist in *seconde*. I expected that Mirabelle would at once fall back, which is what I wished, for I did not desire to wound him until after I had humiliated him by demonstrating how completely I was his master; but, contrary to what I had planned, he very neatly avoided my blade, by an instinctive movement, and remained firmly in his place. The point of his sword entered in my right forearm.

Immediately came the cry of "*Halte!*" from

the *directeur de combat*, and the surgeons sprang forward to examine my wound. It was a long gash; the blade had penetrated deeply, but by a lucky chance the artery had not been touched. The surgeons were for declaring the encounter at an end, asserting that my wound placed me in a state of inferiority, but I insisted upon proceeding. I had exchanged a few words with De Volney, and he seconded my desire, for he knew as well as I did that I had received my wound through my own imprudence.

When once again I faced Mirabelle I was more cautious, for I realized that I had done him, at least, the injustice of supposing he knew nothing of swordsmanship. I must confess this adventurer carried things off well on the field. His attitude was most correct, and I was aware that, whatever his shortcomings, I had before me a practised *escrimeur*, calm, vigorous and courageous. His coolness excited my admiration, but the thought came to

me that undoubtedly it was this very quality that had enabled him to win his way into Madame Pointer's graces, and the reflection fired my hate with increased ardor.

We fell on guard again and I waited for his attack, sure that his first success would lead him to take the offensive. I had judged rightly, for indeed he marched directly on me. I waited — waited for that moment I knew would come when his arm would shoot out to its full length. In an instant the thing was done. Out shot his arm. As soon as his blade was well within reach of mine I made a rapid beat in tierce and thrust straight. My sword passed below his arm and entered his breast.

At the cry of "*Halte!*" he fell back and the blood left his face. It was a serious wound I had given him. He tried to hold himself erect as the surgeons made their examination, but the pain was too great, and he tottered and would have fallen, had not his seconds supported him.

Thus ended the affair. My own wound was

bleeding profusely. The surgeons came to dress it before I departed. They held a consultation apart, and came forward as I was leaving to caution me to keep to my bed for several days, as they feared that any excitement or exposure might induce a fever. It was most annoying. I was beside myself with vexation, for Eleanor was to sing that night at the Opera and all the world would be there.

Before Bertrand and I reached my home, I was surprised to discover that my arm was giving me a good deal of pain. He left me in charge of Gaspard, who was ridiculously solicitous, while he went in person to send my physician. I was not sorry to lie down for a time, and I did not protest when the doctor came and administered an opiate which sent me quickly into a disturbed slumber. It seemed to me I had been sleeping only a moment when I was awakened and saw Gaspard peeping in at the door and trying to be as quiet as a cat.

"Can't you keep out of here, you old grand-

mother?" I exclaimed, amused in spite of myself.

"*Pardon — pardon,*" he murmured, approaching and holding forth a letter.

Did I really in the half-light of my shaded chamber recognize that handwriting, or was it the spirit that seemed to emanate from that which had been in her presence that made me know the letter was from Madame Pointer?

"Throw back the curtains," I commanded, and eagerly with my free hand tore open the envelope.

I may not reveal to you the sentiments she expressed about myself that were far beyond all my possible deserving. De Volney had told her of the duel and its outcome. She had wept when she thought that through her my life had been exposed to danger; she knew that what had been done had been solely to protect her, and she blamed herself that she had not heeded my warnings. But not until now had she realized that my dislike of Mirabelle was more than

temperamental; she would never see him again.

My face must have betrayed the pleasure her letter gave me, for I looked up to see Gaspard, whose presence I had forgotten, regarding me, his face wreathed with smiles. I smiled in turn, for never before had he presented me a letter from Madame Pointer with such a cheerful countenance.

"Go to Madame Pointer's house at once," I commanded. "Make to her my profound excuses that my trifling accident prevents me from writing, but say that, without fail, I shall have the pleasure of seeing her at the Opera to-night."

"*Mais — m-m-mais*," he began, stammering as he tried to make some observation.

"Go," I ordered sternly, "and lose no time."

CHAPTER XV

AT THE OPERA

WITH difficulty, I dressed that evening, inwardly chafing that I must appear at the Opera with my arm *en écharpe*. I was late in arriving, but the gala program had been arranged to have the great act from *Samson and Delilah* precede Eleanor's début in the first act of *Roméo et Juliette*, and the Russian dancers, who were then so much in favor, come after her, so I knew that, though I was late, I was early enough for my purpose. Several others were just arriving when I mounted the great marble stairway, several women in exquisite cloaks accompanied by men in uniform or displaying their decorations. We passed through the lines of cuirassiers *en grande tenue*, and already I could feel the excitement and expectancy in the atmosphere.

An obsequious *ouvreuse* opened for me the door of Madame Pointer's loge, and I slipped in with an extreme quietness, for that wonderful aria was being sung. Saint-Saëns himself was directing the orchestra. I could distinguish his massive head in the darkened theater. I saw the silhouettes of Madame Pointer, De Volney and Bruce Converse, and could tell they were turning toward me in greeting. Madame Pointer rose silently, and I knew that she was holding out her hand to me. Awkwardly, with my left hand I groped for hers until our fingers touched. She allowed her hand to rest in mine as she led me in the semi-darkness to the back of the loge.

"Are you really only slightly hurt?" she whispered. "Was it wise to venture here tonight?"

I reassured her. "Believe me, your note wrought the miracle of a cure." And it was true; the pain in my arm was gone.

We continued to talk together in a low tone

so that our voices should not disturb the others. I felt, rather than observed, the intensity of her emotions as she spoke. Never, she told me, had she seen such a brilliant audience; it was like some wonderful *répétition générale* for which every one had been waiting. The king and his suite and the president of France had arrived, and were in the *loge d'honneur* not far from us. All the diplomatic corps were present, the principal Paris notabilities and many visiting celebrities. De Volney had pointed them out to her. She spoke of Converse.

"His mood is of the strangest; he has scarcely spoken," she whispered, her voice a-quiver with apprehension, which I attributed to the tension she was under. "Twice he has said he must leave, and it has been all I could do to persuade him to remain. He seems beside himself with excitement, and terribly depressed."

I glanced toward the front of the box. The fine features of Bruce Converse were outlined

against the light, but I could gain no information from them. I observed, however, that his hands were not still, and that he was continually clasping and unclasping them.

Madame Pointer was worried. "His mood has communicated itself to me," she confessed. "I feel frightfully uneasy. I am so glad you have come. I wish Spaulding Knapp were here, too. He cabled me he would come, but he has not arrived."

The curtain was descending; the lights were on, and from all parts of the house came the spontaneous hearty applause of an audience in good humor with itself. It augured well for Eleanor.

As if unable longer to endure inaction, Converse rose from his place, and without waiting to see Saint-Saëns and his interpreters bow their acknowledgments to those in the royal box, he left us, swinging out of the loge without even a muttered apology. I followed his athletic figure until it passed out of the door. I

looked at Madame Pointer. "You see?" her eyes seemed to say.

"Natural excitement; nothing more," I said reassuringly, but my own mind was filled with misgiving.

"He is merely feeling what we all feel to-night; only he betrays it more than we," said De Volney, and he began quickly pointing out to Madame Pointer's attention celebrities in the audience until he got her interested in the wonderful scene spread out before us. De Volney, who, I believe, knew every one in Paris, was still at this occupation when the *ouvreuse* opened the door of our loge and Mr. Spaulding Knapp entered. We were of course surprised to see him.

"Our steamer was held up by fog," he explained as he greeted us all. This surprising man had engaged a special train to bring him to Paris. As I thought of the commotion his order must have caused to the functionaries of the government railroad, I laughed in spite of

myself. "How very American!" I could not help remarking.

"The train wasn't, believe me," chuckled Mr. Knapp. "If it had been I should have arrived for the opening, but I am glad I am not too late." He turned to Madame Pointer. "I imagine you knew, Leslie, when you sent for me, that I would not disappoint you."

She looked up at him gratefully. "You have never disappointed me yet, Spaulding," she answered approvingly.

"And never will, God helping me," replied this American business man quite fervently, even emphatically.

"What is the matter with Converse?" suddenly asked Mr. Knapp of the Vicomte de Volney. "I passed him in the foyer and he hardly spoke to me."

"Oh, every one is excited to-night," answered Bertrand carelessly, but Madame Pointer informed Mr. Knapp of her apprehension. "I really fear he is not well. He has twice threat-

ened to leave. It would be a pity for him to miss Eleanor's début."

"I'll go and get him," announced Mr. Knapp, departing immediately on his errand.

Into that vast amphitheater directly below and before us and into the loges on every side and above people were returning, impatient for the curtain to rise again and let them behold the new star. Men had stood in the stalls and gazed their full upon the brilliant company; every one had stared at the king; acquaintances and friends had met in the foyer and congratulated one another on the good fortune of being present on such a night; but now they wished the real performance to begin. The lights were down again and the orchestra had begun that brief overture before the opening scene, when Mr. Knapp returned. With him was Converse, and they took seats behind us.

Silence had fallen upon the audience like a cloak that hid it from our sight. So still was it that one could not hear the breathing of

humanity or the rustling of dresses and fans; it was as still as the earth on a summer day before a storm, and through the heavy atmosphere of the theater ran electric currents that sent a tingling tremor through those who silently waited. Was there to be a storm? Would those who had so bitterly criticized carry their warfare even to this place? Were they waiting there, in that hidden mass of humanity, ready to tear to pieces with their cries and hisses the soul of this young untried girl if she failed in the slightest, if she uttered a single false note? Ah, those who knew the venom of thwarted critics and politicians were aware that it would be so.

Slowly the curtain went up and glasses were leveled to get the first glimpse of this Mademoiselle Elenori none of them had ever seen before. In the middle of the row of singers, behind the curtain of gauze that veils those who recite the brief prologue of *Roméo et Juliette* sat Eleanor, the masses of her waving dark hair

falling about her shoulders. So young she looked, so frail, so calm with the unquestioning trust of youth, her eyes wide open, gazing innocently before her — and then the opening chorus:

Verone vit jadis deux familles rivales,
Les Montagues, les Capulets.

Over all was heard that high soprano, true and pure and fresh, a young girl singing, pouring out melody from an unsullied heart; a young girl whose love must, by fate's unreasoning decree, end in the tomb, love that came unsought —

Qui virent naître leurs amours.

The chorus was ended. Already the house was noisy with applause. Above the clapping of hands came a sibilant hissing, but it was not in disapproval of Eleanor. It was from those who, with tears in their eyes because of the pathos of it all and because of their emotion, frowned upon others who could break the spell

with noisy demonstration. As yet the audience had beheld Eleanor's beauty concealed in part by that curtain of gauze — oh, the wise cunning of Signor Tonnelli! — and now they were impatient for the next scene when she would appear in the ballroom and they would see her in the full brilliant light. Even the leader of the orchestra seemed anxious to hasten through the opening bars of the introduction, for the musicians played it much too fast.

"It will be a triumph for her; she has conquered them," whispered Madame Pointer, her voice uneven from emotion.

De Volney smiled at her excess of enthusiasm, for the prophecy was born of friendship and Eleanor had as yet had no opportunity. "It is too early," he said. "We must not be too sure; we must wait at least until she has sung the waltz."

"No, Leslie, you are right," broke in that astonishing Mr. Knapp, who had moved his

chair quite close to Madame Pointer. "The girl has already won. There is something in an audience that a person can feel when it is ready to throw itself at the feet of a singer. It's the same way in a convention, or on the Stock Exchange, during an exciting day. You can't put your hand on what it is; you can't describe it; but you can feel it, and it is here to-night. I tell you, the girl has already won, and she deserves it." Eleanor was on the stage again. A distinct indrawing of the breath in pleasurable satisfaction had greeted her entrance, and over the auditorium ran a ripple of encouraging applause.

Ecoutez! Ecoutez!
C'est le son des instruments joyeux.

No young girl, whose budding womanhood exhaled as a perfume the joy of life, could have more sweetly expressed the rapture that is born of the gay music of the dance. The audience seemed to enter into ecstasy. She stood there graceful, animated, expectant. With a slender

unjeweled hand she put back the dark masses of hair from her shoulders, exposing her white rounded neck, round which was a single strand of pearls. I shall see her always in my memory thus standing, her marvelous dress of gold-embroidered silken velvet, green-white like the spray of the sea reflecting a shimmer of light, like a cloth of gold seen beneath a wave; on her dark hair rested an embroidered head-dress that gave her the suggestion of boyishness that was so lovable.

When she reappeared with Gertrude, the old nurse, the teasing smile that played upon her full lips emphasized this characteristic. Yes, Tonnelli was the wisest of men: she was not acting the part of Juliette — she *was* Juliette. It was as if she did not realize that she was upon a stage and that this was her début before the world's severest critics. And then she launched into that wonderful arietta:

Je veux vivre
Dans le rêve qui m'enivre.

It has been my good fortune to hear many Juliettes, and I make bold to say that never before or since has Gounod's wonderful waltz been so sung. In the original key of G in which the master wrote it, that high clear voice, round and sweet as a bird's, fresh and pure and new as spring-time with the flowers in blossom, poured forth the melodious notes of the waltz, "singing," as says your great poet, Keats, "in full-throated ease," until it seemed the music one heard could come from no human throat, but must be the rapturous expression of some unembodied spirit caroling its joy. One thought of life without death, of love without parting, of gladness without sorrow.

The song had ended, but still its echo remained in the jubilant violins that caught up and repeated the rhythmic refrain. Upon the throng was laid a spell of silence. Wondering, enrapt, with eyes still fastened upon the singer, the great audience sat motionless as if fearing to break the spell too soon and lose one pre-

cious moment of a sensation that could never again be experienced. Not until the last note had died away did the applause come. Was it one voice or was it many in unison that first shouted that deep imperious "*Bravo*"? It seemed to be one commanding voice. Then, as if that cry had been a signal for which the others were waiting, the clamor was let loose.

"*Bravo! Bravo!*" The multitude was screaming its expression of delight. Unison had fled. Each individual was striving to be heard.

"*Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!*" The shrill voices of women mingled with the deep tones of men, and their higher notes of frantic acclaim were borne aloft, the sound vibrating against the lofty painted dome.

"*Bravo! Bravo!* Elenori!" The chorus took up her name, the name Tonnelli had given her. Men had leaped to their feet and were wildly waving programs and hats. Like the rolling of drums beating a cacophonous accom-

paniment was the wild unmeasured clapping together of many palms. The king was standing with both hands outstretched in applause.

Upon the stage stood Juliette, her lips trembling as bravely the boyish innocent smile struggled to overcome the tears. In my own eyes was a mist that blurred my sight of her and a hot hand seemed pressed upon my throat.

The crowd had taken up another cry. "*Bis! Bis!*" it was shouting, and in an instant the whole house was ringing with the word. De Volney turned suddenly as if in appeal to me. His face was white, and he, who was forever so calm, was trembling with excitement. "No!" he shouted in protest, making a trumpet of his hands, his words barely reaching me above the tumult. "They can't mean to ask her to sing it again — that song and in that key! It will be too much for her! It is cruel!"

For answer I pointed to the clamoring, unsatisfied, excited throng below us. "They will not be denied," I answered, but I doubt if he

heard, for he was leaning from the loge shouting to the crowd: "*Non! Non! C'est trop!*" I caught him by the arm. He might as well have tried to stop the flowing of the Seine when it is in flood.

Eleanor could no longer keep back the tears. That happiness which knows no other full expression had forced them from their hiding-place that they might be witnesses of this memorable hour. She heard the insistent demand that the song be sung again. That demand of "*Bis!*" had swept up to her like the notes of trumpets, and she turned timidly smiling toward the wings where Signor Tonnelli was standing, stroking his beard nervously, with his little sharp eyes dancing as he looked upon his singer. He nodded to her approvingly and waved his hand in consent to the director of the orchestra.

Again the violins took up the strain and Eleanor was singing, and the house was as hushed and still as if no tumult had passed over

it. The storm had gone by, and there was calm again with sunshine and the birds singing and all the air filled with melody as each one dreamed his own dream to the music of that crystal, pure young voice. If in my heart there had been fear for her when she began, it vanished as the round full notes, clear and high and true, poured forth in a golden shower as free and unrestrained as summer rain. It seemed as if the voice were not of her or of any earthly creature, but of some divine being, whose very soul was music and who sang without conscious effort because she had been created for singing.

This time the crowds did not wait for the concluding violins. At the last note of the singer men were on their feet shouting as in a delirium of joy. There was no curbing them. I expected to see them rush upon the stage and bear the singer off in triumph.

"Elenori! Elenori!" they shouted. "*Bis! Bis!*" The orchestra tried to play, and its

music was drowned by the cheers of the audience. Inconsiderately, madly, insistently, men and women were demanding that song again. De Volney, leaning from his loge, was screaming to that maddened throng to be still, and I and others near by joined in his effort. I looked back at Madame Pointer. She sat with her hands to her face, weeping, and that amazing Mr. Spaulding Knapp stood by her, gazing upon the crowd, outwardly as calm as ever, but his teeth were clenched hard together and his face was set. The sight of Bruce Convérse, bending forward near him, startled me. The artist's eyes were turned away from the scene, but I could see that his face was contorted. Even as I looked I saw his powerful body tremble as with a convulsion, and he staggered out of the door of the loge almost as if he might fall.

From the wings out upon the stage came Signor Tonnelli, a strange little figure in his black coat. He held up a hand for silence. Men

recognized him and ceased their clamor to hear what he might say.

"*Mesdames et messieurs,*" he began in that quaint accent of his, a good-humored smile accompanying his words, "the opera you have forgot all about, but he is not finish'. You will have the pleasure to hear Mademoiselle Elenori sing again. I am only an impresario, that is all, but I should be a verra bad impresario, indeed, if I let a young girl sing three times that arietta which your divine *maestro,* Gounod, wrote in that key, just, I think, to try the voices of singers. I am verra sure you think so, too, and, no, you will not ask it, eh?"

The crowd was laughing, brought back to its senses. "*Bravo,* Tonnelli!" men cried as the little magician bowed and walked off the stage, waving, when he reached the wings, a signal for the orchestra to begin.

From that time on, there never was an audience so pleased with itself. Really, it was amusing; each one seemed to consider that it

was he or she who had discovered in Mademoiselle Elenori one of the world's great singers. When she sang that duet with Romeo it was no longer a Juliette who sang to them; it was their Juliette. In that exciting moment, when Juliette learns that the stranger who has won her heart is the mortal enemy of her race, her girlish fright and dismay seemed less portrayed than real.

"*La haine est le berceau de cet amour fatal,*"

she sang tremblingly, and one could see that those who listened were deeply troubled for her, so completely had she won them.

Of that scene which followed the curtain's fall my unpractised pen can not write. It is a matter of the history of the Opera of Paris. Perhaps you were there and saw and heard it all for yourself. Perhaps, already, you have seen through the thin disguise of names; perhaps, indeed, long before this you have recognized those whom I have tried to veil with a

romancer's cloak, for I am but little of an artist and must be content with telling of things as they were. If you were there, I know well that you have shared with me that longing to live over again those sublime moments when a young girl stood before that adoring, madly cheering throng, the "fair song-conjured dream" of the great world of Paris. Not one soul in all that multitude but wished to testify to the exquisite joy that she had given; not one person that was not standing, proclaiming the name of Elenori. From the tiers of loges leaned jeweled women who tore flowers from their dresses and scattered them over the unheeding shouting throng, in the effort to offer the fragrant tributes to the object of their adoration.

I saw the king call to his side an aide-de-camp and cry something in his ear, and the man immediately departed.

CHAPTER XVI

A ROYAL TOKEN THAT SEEMS BUT PART OF A SONG-CONJURED DREAM WHICH IS RUDELY SHATTERED

THE king had sent for Eleanor. Like the secret of Polichinelle, or like so many state secrets, his majesty had no sooner given the command than it was known apparently to every one in the house. During the *entr'acte* people told it to one another excitedly as they promenaded in the foyer or visited in the loges. Even Mr. Potts, Mr. Judd and Mr. Tuttle heard of it, and came running to us with the information and, although it had already reached us, they must tell it over again, enjoying the sensation of those who bring startling news. Nothing else was talked of — that and the sudden fame of Eleanor.

There was more gazing than ever at the

royal box when people were once again in their places waiting for Nijinski and Karsavina to dance through that dream of rhythmic motion, "*Le Spectre de la Rose.*" Weber's haunting waltz had just begun when Eleanor entered the presence of the king, with Signor Tonnelli standing just behind her. Nijinski, alone, that marvelous creature who, upon the scene, seems like a pagan god, a bounding faun, Nijinski, alone, could have held the attention of that audience so that only a few saw the king and the president rise and salute, in turn, the one who so lately had been Juliette and who still seemed to be the heroine she had so well portrayed.

"Mademoiselle," said the king, as he stood before her with inclined head, "for a singer the only reward is the applause of those she delights. Anything else placed beside the public acclamation you have just received must appear almost meaningless, and yet I hope that I may be allowed to testify to the great joy

you have given." He turned to his aide-de-camp and unpinned from that officer's breast a glittering jeweled decoration. His majesty spoke again with an added solemnity. "A great artist is an honor to all mankind. In the name of my people I create you an officer of the order of the Blessed *Sainte Cécile* of holy memory."

No greater honor comes to a musician than to wear the cross of *Sainte Cécile* and Eleanor knelt gracefully as the king bent over and fastened the insignia on her dress. With a gentle hand he pinned the jeweled cross just over her heart, and then, bending still lower, the sovereign gravely, reverently, bestowed the accolade.

When Eleanor rose, her blue eyes were glistening and her heart was too crowded with emotion for her to speak, but the wise king, looking upon her, knew what was in her thought. Silence is often the highest expression of appreciation.

Nor was Signor Tonnelli forgotten by his majesty. The king congratulated him on the success of the evening, and said that his fame, which was already great, would henceforth be tenfold greater than it had ever been.

"Your majesty's gracious compliment adds to my happiness," answered the impresario, "and I was already verra happy over Mademoiselle Elenori's exquisite performance."

The king was much amused by Signor Tonnelli and very pleased with the little impresario.

"I shall expect you some day to bring Mademoiselle Elenori to my palace that she may sing for me there and that my people may have the joy of hearing her. On that day I shall show you, Signor Tonnelli, that I have not forgotten your share in this memorable evening and that I know how to appreciate the genius of the impresario, as well as the genius of the prima donna."

In that way Tonnelli received the royal command, not the first he had received by any

means, but no other had ever so delighted him.

Though from where I sat with Madame Pointer I could see only a small part of what had transpired in the royal loge, Signor Tonnelli and Eleanor, herself, soon after told me the little details which I have set down just as they occurred and not greatly differing from the long glowing accounts that appeared in all of the newspapers the next day. But of the scene which followed I was not, thanks to the *bon Dieu*, a witness nor, happily, was any one else except Signor Tonnelli, Eleanor and Bruce Converse and, perhaps, an officious eavesdropping *ouvreuse* or two, who had the subsequent good taste to keep quiet about it.

Eleanor and Signor Tonnelli, elated with what had passed, were on their way from the royal box to join our party, when, suddenly, Bruce Converse stood before them. Had he sprung from beneath the marble floor he could hardly have surprised them more, for the corridor had apparently been deserted. His eyes

were wild, his face ashy white, and he seemed laboring under the stress of some great emotion that he was struggling to subdue.

It is difficult to delve into the psychological state of one whose mind, receiving a great shock, a cataclysmal awakening, feeds upon itself, devours itself, as it were, even as mad animals turn upon themselves in their moments of frenzy. There are few of us who have not experienced that sudden sickening agony of soul that follows the revelation of unforeseen disastrous consequences of something we have done or left undone. The wild stabbing regret, the poignant remorse strikes so deeply and quickly that we cry out with pain that seems too great to bear.

Not until Bruce Converse had entered the Opera that evening had the realization come to him that the fair dream that had always been his, but which he had allowed to be obscured momentarily by other dreams, might never be realized. In an instant, his soul had become a

prey to remorse of the kind that eats at men's hearts and makes them curse the day their mothers bore them. Always, he had loved Eleanor Moore; always, he had expected that some day he would claim her for his own. He was not a vain or conceited man; he was no more selfish than the rest of us; but now he realized that he had thought of himself and not of her; of his career; of his place in the world and had asked Love to bide his time. When the world was conquered, then he would have something to offer her. How many men have thought and done as he did! Alas!

Now, in a flash, he had seen his folly. This girl who had sung before a king was no longer the girl he knew in the old studio. It was she who had conquered the world. He had heard the people proclaiming her as *their* Elenori! She belonged to them now. She could never any more belong to him alone. He had thrown away the one thing in all the world he most wanted and it might have been his if — if —

There it was again; his mind was feeding upon itself, devouring itself like a thing gone mad.

"Eleanor!" He held out his hands toward her.

"You!" was all she could say, so startled had she been by his unexpected appearance.

"Have you no other greeting for me?" he asked bitterly.

She endeavored to calm herself. Her heart was wildly beating. "You frightened me," she said.

"I tried to see you before. I went to the stage entrance, but they would not let me pass. I should have forced my way past them, but they told me you had gone to the loge of the king. I was on my way there."

Eleanor was endeavoring desperately to be commonplace, but her lips trembled as she spoke. "I expected to see you with our friends. Signor Tonnelli and I were just going to their loge. Shall we not join them?"

"No," he cried, "we must not go there. I

hate them. I have learned to hate them while I heard you singing. It has been torment to me."

"That is hardly complimentary." She tried to smile.

It needs but a spark to cause the greatest explosion. Bruce Converse's control over himself was gone. His face was distorted as one in agony. "Eleanor, for God's sake do not laugh at me!" he said hoarsely. "To-night when I saw you it brought back the old days. You can not have forgotten them. I saw how these people who pretended to be our friends had acted to keep us apart. It came to me clearly. My God, how blind I had been before! Oh, I was blind, blind, blind! I loved you then as I love you now, but I let these false friends feed my selfish ambition. I hate them! I shall never see them again!"

There is a gentle dignity, a true valuation of becoming pride, that women possess in much finer degree than men. Converse had been self-

ish after the manner of all men; he had been the egoist, and his neglect had left a wound a few impassioned words could not heal. Eleanor bore herself bravely, concealing her emotion, but the blood had left her face.

"You are wrong in speaking as you do," she answered.

"No, I am not wrong. To-night when I saw you there, when I heard those people applauding you and calling your name, it seemed to me that you belonged to them, that you could never belong to me, that the happiness I used to know with you near was gone forever."

"Bruce," Eleanor began, and her voice had in it that impersonal quality that showed better than words how distant she had grown from him, "you are not yourself to-night, and I am very tired. We should not talk of these things now, but it is well that we understood each other. Whatever might have been once —"

He interrupted her with a cry. "My God,

Eleanor, don't speak of it as if it were forever past!"

"It is past, Bruce," she answered calmly. "I have had a long time to think of it, a long time when you were thinking of other things. These friends of ours, of yours more than of mine, who have talked to us, imparting their wisdom, have acted as they thought best for us. And they have been right."

"No, no," he protested.

"Yes, they have been right. We might as well regard the matter frankly. Their experience has been wider than ours. They have seen other careers, many of them. They have seen men and women able, eager to work for art, to help the world, just as you are helping it — men and women of genius brought down, made commonplace, useless, because they clung to each other's necks, found each other's arms, fettered each other with their love. Sooner or later, sooner or later but surely, one wanted to be free, to work in the old way, and was held

down by the other; and so their love burned out, their ambitions were unfulfilled, their souls became as dead as ashes."

Many philosophers hold that great love is akin to great hatred, the *odi et amo* of Catullus. The wise La Rochefoucauld has said: "Judging love by its effects, it resembles hate more often than love." Hatred, anger and wounded pride flamed in menacing baneful light from Bruce Converse's eyes as he confronted Eleanor.

"It is not true! It is false!" he cried. "You do not yourself believe it. You are speaking this cant just to make it appear that you are not heartless. It is because you prefer the applause of those fools in there." He waved his hand contemptuously toward the auditorium of the theater. Through the closed doors the strains of Weber's waltz came to them distant as an echo. "No, it's because your ambition is set on a career and you would sacrifice anything for it. You want the cheap

fame it will bring, the notoriety. You want people to come and flatter you and see you dressed up in absurd costumes on the stage. It is that. You want to hear the world talk about you. God knows," he cried with bitter scorn, "it may be that you covet the money such things will bring to you."

Eleanor winced under the insult. Signor Tonnelli had been standing a little apart, holding himself admirably with eyes averted, appearing to hear nothing that was being said, but he had lost no word. Instantly now he intervened.

"Monsieur, you may not say such thing to this younga lady. They are not true."

His words converted Bruce Converse into a madman. With one arm this giant swept the little impresario aside, and stood towering over him as if about to strike with terrible strength.

"You!" he cried. "You dare to interfere now! It is you who have taken this girl away; and for what? To make money out of her.

That is all you care about. You think of nothing else. You would wreck her soul and mind and body, yes and gladly, just to put a few thousand francs into your pocket. Art!" He threw up his hands in a gesture of supreme contempt. "What do you know of art? What do you care for it? Money is your god; it is the god of all your tribe. You are after money, money, money — nothing else!"

Signor Tonnelli was a very brave little man. He was not frightened, but had a dagger been put in his hand I think he would have killed Converse then. He tried to speak calmly, but he made a sorry effort with his English.

"That is not true; he is a big lie. I would give a great voice to the world so everrabody could hear it and it would make him better. I would do that; but you, what would you do if you could, eh? You would take that so beautiful voice and put it in a little cage just for yourself. You are an artist, eh? You would

do that. Yes, that is what you would do if you could. Bah!"

There came from the theater the applause that told the end of the ballet. Now I had observed the king and the president a few minutes before resume their places. The royal party had now left the loge, and I wondered why Eleanor and Signor Tonnelli had not joined us. I went out into the corridor to look for them, and Eleanor, catching sight of me, ran forward and seized me by the arm.

"Prince Florimond," she cried, "please take me away at once. Take me to my hotel."

Her white face and frightened appeal caused me to realize that some untoward happening had shocked her. This was not the time or place to ask what it might be. I looked up and saw Converse and Tonnelli facing each other. Converse turned suddenly and walked away, leaving Tonnelli gazing after him defiantly. Intuitively came to me an intimation of what had happened.

People were streaming from the loges, hurrying on their way out of the opera-house. Several had recognized Eleanor, and at once there was a crowd about her speaking her name and overwhelming her with congratulations.

"Please take me away quickly," she begged.

I caught sight of Madame Pointer standing at the door of her loge, and in dumb show, across the heads of the intervening people, I conveyed to her that Eleanor wished to go directly home. She understood. God's blessing on those women who always understand without explanations!

We made our way with difficulty, but when we came to the top of the great stairs the people formed a pathway for us, lining the wide stairway and leaning over the marble balustrades, cheering and applauding and calling Eleanor by name. Flowers were thrown that fell on her or at her feet. Bravely Eleanor bowed and smiled, but never did any one in the hour of triumph wear so sad a countenance.

CHAPTER XVII

AN EVENTFUL MORNING THAT IS FILLED WITH SURPRISES FOR NEARLY EVERY ONE

OUR automobile had not quitted the brilliant Place de l'Opéra before Eleanor gave way to the tears that I was sure would come. We can often feel a woman's tears long before we see them.

"Oh-h-h!" she sobbed, quivering with pain and hiding her eyes with her hands as if she wished to shut out the vision of some tragic spectacle. "Oh-h-h! It was terrible, terrible! He hates me! He said that I — that I —" But her sobs choked further utterance.

I sat by her in silent sympathy, knowing that when a woman weeps it is not well to ask questions. In good time, I was sure she would tell

me all that she wished me to know, and I desired to hear only so much as would relieve her burdened spirit to tell or indicate to me how I might serve her. Long heart-breaking sobs continued to convulse her, but, at last, in unconnected words, she had told me enough to make me aware of the dreadful scene she had been through.

"And I had been so happy the moment before," she cried bitterly. "I had persuaded myself that I was happy. Now it is ended. I shall hate the stage forever. I shall never sing in public again."

Vainly I tried to console her. "Never, never! It is finished," she answered.

It was not so much this determination — for when we are young "never" and "forever" are words that fall lightly from our lips — that caused me uneasiness as the suddenly revealed knowledge that she had loved so deeply Bruce Converse, loved him still, so that no other happiness was to be measured with that love. I

covered myself with reproaches that I had helped to thwart this girl whom I held so dear, and who so implicitly trusted in me, from achieving her desire, beside which all else was as naught. I, a philosopher, had opposed one of nature's great laws, that of selection, and now I was seeing the consequences. Too late, I was repenting of my folly.

With as much gentleness as I could, and an inward trembling, for my soul was afraid, I confessed to Eleanor that which had been done. I spared not myself, for I knew that I might not escape the responsibility, but I tried to make plain to her that what we had done had been inspired by an ill-guided desire to help him and her. She heard me silently. As we drove up to the wide deserted doorway of her hotel she placed her hand on mine.

"I have known it all along," she said quietly. "I could see what was being done. There is no use to talk about it now. It is too late. You must not blame yourself too much;

you are my good friend. I know that all of you acted as you thought best." Wounded as she was, her gentleness, her sweetness did not desert her.

The automobile had stopped and the man was waiting at the door, but I detained her. "You will let me come to see you to-morrow?" I asked. "And promise me that you will not take this too much to heart to-night. You will go to your aunt? She is waiting for you?"

She nodded her head. "Poor Aunt Ella! She left the theater to come here to have a good cry, as she said. She was so happy."

Eleanor tried to smile, but I could see that a fresh torrent of tears lay under the eyes that met mine. Before that torrent could be released she had hastily said "Good-by" and vanished into the hotel.

That night I could not sleep. My mind was troubled about Eleanor, and I pictured her as robbed also of sleep, not only for this night but probably for many nights to come, by a regret

that it had been my misfortune, in part, to cause her. Every effort, I determined, should be made to undo what had been done. My brain worked busily with schemes to achieve this end, and I waited impatiently for the morning to come. Life is never so attractive to us as when it offers the opportunity to repair the mistakes of the past. Eagerly, I wished to set about my task. As soon as the servants were about I rang for my breakfast. I was having my coffee when Gaspard came with a letter.

"What, the *courrier* already!" I exclaimed.

Gaspard gazed at me with melancholy misgivings. "No, my master, it is but seven o'clock. This was brought but this instant by a man servant in great haste, who said it was of the utmost importance."

The letter was from Madame Pointer. I guessed at something of its import as I tore open the envelope. The first words were a cry of alarm. Converse had written her a dark frightening letter, which he had left in person

with her concierge at sunrise. He was fleeing from France, from those whom he now implicated in the wreck of his life.

"I am nearly crazed with remorse and apprehension," Madame Pointer wrote. "Help us, my true good friend, to undo the wrong we have done. His letter makes me fear that in his present state of mind he may do something desperate."

Immediately, I left my breakfast table, anxious to find Bruce Converse without a moment's delay.

"My master has not finished his coffee," Gaspard urged.

"It will wait until I return," I answered, as I went out of the house and into the street.

The first cab that I saw I hailed. During the long night of pondering, my imagination had seen the situation from every aspect, even this one of threatened tragedy, and I felt that I knew now where I might find Bruce Converse. I went, not to that new studio in the Parc

Monceau Quarter, with its luxurious appointments, but to the old studio in the Rue d'Assas, and there, even as I had imagined, I found him. He was endeavoring to persuade good Madame Guillou to let him see the old room for a last time, and she, who held the keys of the new tenant who had gone away for the summer, wavered between her duty as concierge and her wish to please one who had once been her favorite *locataire*. I think she suspected something of the reason for his request.

If ever a man stood in need of a friend it was Bruce Converse then. His condition I can describe only by a popular idiom — he was all gone to pieces. His bloodless face, his reddened eyelids, the unbrushed hair, his clothes, all showed plainly that he had gone through what we call a white night. Undoubtedly, he had not slept; it is probable he had been on his feet all the time, walking the streets aimlessly, propelled by that throbbing engine in his brain that would not cease.

I laid a hand gently on his arm. He seemed to take my presence for granted, for he only looked at me as one who is at the end of his strength, who can resist no more, like delirious fever patients who, after paroxysms in which their force seems inexhaustible, lie calmly back, unequal to the slightest further exertion, with the returned light of reason shining dimly in their eyes.

"I want you to come with me, my friend," I said to him, and, unresisting, he allowed me to conduct him to the cab. Wearily, he sank upon the seat. I told the driver where to go, and scarcely a word was spoken as we rode across the city to Eleanor's hotel. It may have been that to Bruce Converse that drive was only a part of the wild dream from which he felt he must some time awake.

I was familiar with the suite of rooms that had been set apart for Eleanor and Mrs. Crackenby, and we went at once to them. My knock at the door was answered by Fiorella,

who had once been a model, and had been taken by Eleanor into service as a maid. Astonishment and relief were so eloquent upon her features that I knew her emotions must try to find expression in words, so with a finger on my lip I cautioned her to silence.

"Tell your mistress that I am here and must see her at once alone. Do not say that any one else is with me."

"Oh, Monsieur le Prince, she has not slept. She has done nothing but weep. What has happened?"

"'S-sh! Ask no questions, but go and do as you are bid."

She disappeared and almost at once the door reopened and Eleanor entered. Poor Eleanor, how my heart pitied her! Her face showed the suffering she had undergone. She had not changed her dress. Her dark waving hair was down about her shoulders. Under her eyes were blue shadows. She met my gaze with a look of hopeless inquiry. Misery had walked

with her that night to the world's end. Then as her look traveled beyond me and she became slowly aware of the presence of Converse, a clear light came to her tear-washed eyes.

"Bruce!" she cried, holding out her arms to him. "Bruce! Oh, I am so glad!"

And Bruce Converse, as though the hideous specters of his dream had at last been chased away, repeated words that had been upon his lips ever since that horrid nightmare had begun: "Eleanor, forgive me!"

As his arms folded about her and he held her as if he intended never to release her again in this world, he kept repeating: "I am so sorry, so sorry, so sorry!" and she murmured all the while: "Oh, I am so glad, so glad, so glad!" It is the strange language of love. One was weeping and making a confession of joy, while upon the lips of the other was a confession of sorrow, yet their meaningless words meant all and everything to themselves, and each one understood. Sorrow and joy — they

were the same to those two. Henceforth, there could be no sorrow and no joy for one without the other. They were one; the mind of one was the mind of the other. Words were of no avail, they counted for naught; love gave expression to the thought that was in their heart. Love was all in all; no consideration of glory sullied its pure beauty; no idea of separation, now or after, clouded its radiance. They were standing upon the heights where it is always sunshine.

Quietly, I slipped out of the door. Truly, I had beheld more than it was my privilege or my intention to behold, but now the precious souvenir was mine: as long as life should last, I should see them as I saw them then. Exalted I rode away, with a song on my lips.

The world was topsyturvy that morning, and I was not the least topsyturvy of the lot. I drove directly to the home of Madame Pointer to acquaint her with the news that would turn her dismay to delight. Early as it was, she

was out. My mind conceived what mission it was that occupied her. Awkwardly and with pain, I wrote with my left hand a few words that should console her. Thence, I went to the Vicomte de Volney's. He, too, was away from home.

Only when I reached my door, was I conscious of a great fatigue. The sleepless nights had told on me. There was fever in my wounded arm, and I was glad to lie down to rest. But sleep does not come when the brain is busy weaving intricate patterns in the fabric of life. I tried to force myself into a state of repose, but the shuttle of my thoughts flew too swiftly. The fatigue of the body could not conquer the activity of the brain. It seemed to me that I had been fighting this battle with my rebellious faculties for many hours and was on the point of obtaining a victory, when Gaspard tiptoed into the room.

"Is it not enough," I said to him crossly, "that you watch constantly over my waking

moments? Must you come creeping into my bedchamber to observe how I sleep?"

He bowed his head before the rebuke. "*Pardon.* It is the American gentleman, who says he will see my master at once, and will not accept of my excuses."

To Gaspard, Mr. Spaulding Knapp was always "the American gentleman." Some important mission, some new development in the recent exciting events, I argued, must be the cause of his urgent demand. I rose.

"Tell the gentleman I descend immediately. I shall not keep him waiting."

It was a different Mr. Knapp that I met in my salon. His aggressiveness was gone. Hesitatingly he apologized for disturbing me, and seemed unable to tell me directly the object of his visit.

"I should not have insisted upon seeing you were it not for the fact that I am leaving at once for Cherbourg, there to take the steamer for America. My automobile is at the door.

It is unlikely that I shall return to France, and I have come to say good-by."

"Oh, surely you will return," I made haste to say. "I did not know you were going so soon, but do not pretend that the parting is to be for so long. I should greatly regret it. Ah, no, you are one of those Americans who look upon crossing the ocean as we Frenchmen look upon crossing the Seine. You will soon return."

He shook his head. "It is unlikely." Then his clear gray eyes looked unflinchingly into mine. "Prince, the object of my visit was not alone to say good-by." He paused and then went on more rapidly. "When I came to Paris this time, it was, as you probably know, in response to an urgent cable message from Leslie Pointer." Again he paused, as if what he wished to say were difficult.

"Yes, I know," I said.

"I have known her nearly all her life," Mr. Knapp continued. "From the time she was a

little girl, I have been in love with her. If I have accomplished anything worth while in my life, I ascribe it to my desire to be worthy of her love — to have something I could offer her and not be ashamed. I saw her marry my closest friend, Pointer, and she was not very happy. When he died, my life was again devoted to the thought of some day persuading her to be my wife. It was not to be. Long ago, she made me understand that I could never be anything to her but the good friend I had always tried to be."

Strong man as he was, it was not easy for Spaulding Knapp to continue, but he seemed to take a firmer hold of himself to force his confession to the end. "To-day, I have learned that my hope, which had been reborn because of her message to me, was false. The error was my own, entirely my own. The significance I gave to her urgent demand that I should come here sprang from my own desire. She wished my presence in Paris solely that I

might witness Miss Moore's triumph. It is one of the noble traits of her character — interest in others. She has aided many." He was silent for a moment. "My mistake," he went on, "forced from her an admission, Prince, of her love for you. I, perhaps, have no right to speak of it, for I think she would not now have told me of it had she not wished to convince me of the hopelessness of my love for her, but I may not have the opportunity to talk to you again."

My brain was reeling. The blood pounded at my temples so that I was hardly sure I heard his words aright. "I have come to congratulate you, but not for that alone," he continued. "I wished you to know of my love for her and how long it has endured. It is unnecessary to say to you what I am about to say, but so many American women have coveted titles that I came here intending to say it, and you will understand. Although your title is so high and your name so honored, it is not that which

has influenced her choice. Her love for you would have been the same had you possessed neither title nor fortune. It is that which I wish you always to remember. Be kind to her — but you are always kind. She herself has said so more than once since I have known you. I shall always be your friend — your friend and hers. Good-by."

I could not speak. All my senses were marshaled in an effort to keep myself from falling, for I was dizzy with the emotion of exquisite joy his words had caused. Never had I dared before to hope; never had I dared to acknowledge even to myself this love that had lain so long in my heart. What I had imagined was a secret fastened within my own soul was now proclaimed by another's lips. And she, the object of my silent adoration, had seen! And the love I bore her was mysteriously returned!

I stood there alone in my own house and trembled for my reason. My troubled gaze

sought familiar objects about the room, fastening upon them as an anchor to steady my whirling senses, endeavoring by my remembrance of these familiar things to convince myself that what I had heard was real.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PRINCE TELLS HIS STORY

IT is true, perhaps, that I am old-fashioned in this modern France of the freethinkers, but never have I failed to find consolation and help in the ancient faith of my fathers. The experience of a life already growing long has taught me that, instinctively, in the great crises of existence, when depressed by supreme sorrow or exalted by exquisite joy, we seek a Power beyond our own to bear with us the burden of our grief or to hear our confession of gratitude for our supernal happiness. After all, have not the great philosophers, though they would confuse it by many names, reached the same conclusion?

When that surprising Mr. Spaulding Knapp

had left me, and I was again master of myself, I went to the little chapel in my home, and, kneeling there before the altar, I gave thanks to my Maker. Then, almost as a compelling rite of sentiment, I went to my room and placed fresh red roses in that vase of Lancaster that had been a prince's gift to my mother so many years before.

When I departed from my house it was glorious summer, a day full of sunshine. *O! le beau soleil!* I could have run to the presence of her whom I sought. With pain I prevented myself from leaping into an automobile and quickly going whither I was bound, but a something stronger almost than life itself stayed me, a something of old tradition.

"Calm thyself," I counseled my beating heart. "Thou must go about this matter with becoming dignity. Give time to thyself for reflection, that at last thou mayst be master of thy emotions and show thyself worthy of thy blood."

I walked by the Seine, whose waters were dancing with joy, reflecting the gay color of trees and passing boats. I crossed the Pont de l'Alma with its soldiers of stone, and so up the broad avenue to the Etoile. And then I was in her home, in the room that spoke so of her, waiting and endeavoring to be calm as the slow moments passed. I heard the rustling of her dress in the ante-chamber and she stood at the door, smiling, both hands outstretched.

"Oh, Prince Florimond, how can I ever thank you?"

Love that is love makes sacred the object of its worship. Yesterday I could have taken her hands into my own; now it was that, for the moment, I could not bear that mine should touch her. I spoke to her the words that I had framed during my walk.

"Madame, I received to-day a visit from Monsieur Spaulding Knapp, to whom I shall be henceforth forever grateful. It is he who, in his great friendship, has given me the cour-

age to speak. I should never have possessed the audacity to confess to you what has so long been the cherished secret of my heart. I had not dared to—"

Of what use are the resolves of calmness? Philosophy and philosophers are powerless against the primal human emotions. All that I had schooled myself to say was gone in a moment, and I was kneeling before my saint, pouring forth my prayer in a cascade of words that had in them neither philosophy nor logic nor much of thought, but, springing in flood from an overflowing heart, they bore on like the harmony of falling waters the wild music of my love. God knows, I knelt there so close to my beloved in all humility. Who was I that I should so aspire? What could I offer for a treasure beyond all worldly price? An honored name? Fortune? What are they in comparison to youth? And that, alas, I could no longer give as one counts the relentless years.

"Leslie, God has been good to me. Never before to-day have I allowed myself to contemplate the life that I have lived as lonely and barren. I have striven as best I might with the cold philosophies of ancients and moderns to sustain me, but always, in my secret heart, I have waited for this day. Now, I realize how blank and bleak has been my existence. Now, I know that without you I could not long have lived. I must have died as plants die, withered and dried and blown away by the winds, but now, oh, my Princess, you have come like sunshine to bring back freshness and strength and life, and for you I shall be always young. My name shall not now die with me, and you will make that name even more honored than it has been before. To-day, before I came to you, I prayed to the good God to make me worthy of you, and I placed roses to the memory of my mother, telling her that you were as she had been, and in my heart was a heavenly peace, for I knew

that she was happy in the great happiness of her son. It was as if we were closer than we had been since she died, when I was a little child."

But Madame Pointer took quickly one step back from me. "No! No! No!" she cried. "No! I can not listen! Don't!"

As I tried to speak she put one hand upon my forehead, as if to prevent me from continuing. So strong had been the torrent of my words she could not until then have spoken.

"Spaulding Knapp!" she exclaimed. "What has he said to you?" Her words came mechanically, as one who while speaking bends the mind to recall other words.

"It was he, who loves you almost as I do, who came to me and gave me the courage to hope."

"But, tell me — say it to me just as he said it to you — repeat his words — what did he say? What — *could* he have said?" Her

voice was a monotone, and she seemed to be struggling to speak audibly.

As best I could I told her of the visit I had received that afternoon. When I had finished a sob convulsed her, causing her whole body to tremble, and she hid her face in her hands. Gently I tried to remove them. They were as ice.

"It was my mistake," she sobbed. "How can you ever forgive me? I never dreamed that he could misunderstand. I told him I was to be married. I had not meant to tell any one just now, but he has "— a last sob interrupted her —"he has known me ever since I was a child. He has been always the best of friends and my adviser, and I feared — it was foolish of me, but he is intensely proud of America — I feared he might think I had been blinded by a title. I mentioned no name. Oh, what a foolish coward I was, but it was all so new to me I could not bring myself to speak the name I am to bear. I see now what he

thought, for we had been talking so much of you and of your great kindness. I am to marry the Vicomte de Volney. As soon as Spaulding Knapp left me, I wrote to you. I thought you had received the letter. I thought when I saw you — I thought you had come to congratulate me."

De Volney! De Volney! The name went crashing through my brain like a shot that ends life. Why had I not seen? How foolish, how blind, I had been! It was plain enough now, but — Bertrand de Volney! I had thought he was one who had steeled himself against love.

I made an effort to speak. "I do congratulate you. He is worthier than I. May you both be forever happy."

She came to where I stood, and her hand rested tenderly upon mine. "Prince Florimond, I am so very sorry." Tears were in her eyes. God bless her!

How I got myself out of the house, I do not

know. I hope I made not a too bad show of it. Yes, I should desire to think that I acquitted myself well. It is the crises of life that determine whether a man, whatever he may be born, be really a peasant or a prince.

I must have wandered about for several hours, but of it all I recall nothing. Then I became conscious that I was standing on the Quai des Grands Augustins, talking to an ancient *bouquiniste* who had sold books to my father, and who still spoke of me as "the young prince." It was dark and a soft rain was falling. I was burning up with fever. The wound in my arm was like fire, and my body seemed numb with pain. Gratefully I felt the cooling rain-drops beat upon my face and hands.

"The young prince is not well," the old man was saying. "Monsieur should not be out in this dog's weather without the protection of an umbrella."

I looked into the ambushed eyes of the sturdy old graybeard muffled in his cape.

"And is it thou, Père Cormon, standing in the rain at thy age, who shouldst warn me to cover myself like a woman?" I replied to him in raillery.

"It is well for us who are used to it to take the weather as it comes," was his kindly answer, "but the young prince should seek his home."

"Thou art right, my old friend, and grateful am I that I have a home to go to, for, in truth, I am tired. The 'young prince' is no longer young." I gave the brave man a gold piece against the morrow's purchase and took my way homeward.

Never have the steps of my father's house seemed so lonely. The thought struck me like a knife that I must go up and down them forever alone and there would never be another Prince de Saint-Sauveur whose feet would press them.

Gaspard was at the door, anxious as he was always, but now I felt no resentment because

of his solicitude. He is a good and faithful friend, old Gaspard, and I have not been always as gentle with him as he deserves.

"My master is ill!" he cried when he saw me.

"Nonsense. It is nothing. Is the dinner ready?"

"Ready this long time, my master."

In my room, I found her letter. Something said to me it might be the last I should ever receive from her, and as I slowly read it I raised to my lips the page her hand had touched.

With difficulty I dressed. That trifling wound was giving me no end of bother. When I came down to the table Gaspard was standing by my chair, the look of anxiety still in his eyes. I thought of the old servant, who had drunk with my father to the health of my sainted mother, and I thought, too, of how he had raised his glass with my father when I was born.

I took one of the glasses he filled

"Gaspard," I commanded, "I wish you to fill two glasses."

He asked no questions but his hand trembled. Standing, I took one of the glasses he had filled.

"Raise your glass, Gaspard," I said to him. "I wish you to join me in drinking to the health and happiness of a noble and beautiful lady, Madame Leslie Pointer."

The old man's face went suddenly whiter than I had ever seen it, and he almost spilled the wine on the table-cloth, something he had never done in his life.

When we had drunk the toast I said to him:

"She is soon to be married to one of the best of men, my good friend and yours, the Vicomte Bertrand de Volney, whose health I now propose."

"God be thanked!" he gasped fervently, and this time the glass shot to his lips.

I looked at him sharply when the unexpected exclamation escaped him.

"Gaspard, you are an old fool," I said to him sternly.

Then, as he turned away from me to hide the tears that were streaming down his white cheeks, I added more gently:

"We are two old fools, Gaspard. You may serve the dinner."

CHAPTER XIX

ONE WORD MORE

HERE, the reader who has followed so far the gentle story of Prince Florimond, must take a final leave of his philosophising author and allow the editor to indicate, to adumbrate, as it were, the conclusion of the tale thus abruptly ended.

"To be twenty, to be in love and to be in Italy constituted the perfection of human happiness, according to the gifted Baroness de Staël," Prince Florimond was wont to remark but he never failed to qualify his approval by adding: "She should have written Paris instead of Italy. Paris is a much more pleasant place to live in to-day than it was when the worthy Baronne graced her famous salon. We have acquired with the years that charm

which it was then the fashion to believe Italy alone could possess. Our skies may not always be so blue or our breezes so caressing but Paris to-day is the friendliest of all cities and the most beautiful. 'To be twenty, to be in love and to be in Paris'— ah, life holds no more beautiful dream than that. Had it been my fortune to have a son, or had I a well-beloved nephew to whom I would give the most valuable of all gifts, I could wish him no better fortune in his youth than to be in Paris, immersed in honest, happy inspirational love. I should wish him to be here, striving mightily and loving mightily and dreaming those dreams that are born of love and labor. Yes, I think I could wish for him nothing higher than that, nothing that, in the duller time to come, would bring him more splendid memories, and when all is said and done, when little achievement has blunted the edge of greater promise, nothing is more precious than such memories."

How well the words reveal what he would

have written of Bruce Converse and Eleanor Moore. We should have seen them supremely happy, the life of one forever the complement of the other, so inseparable in spirit that the lofty aims and ambitions of one would be but as a reflection of the desire of the other. It is easy for our imaginations to fill in the picture he has sketched for us: the laughing, tender, wise comradeship of Eleanor, the strong reliant genius of Bruce Converse. They go, as says the author at the very beginning, hand in hand, finding love in their labor no less than in their moments of repose. We can observe them as they make their progress to their high and ultimate goals, each one a sure help to the other, the great love in their hearts warming and brightening the lives of those about them, bringing the sunshine with them and the steadying example of noble purpose. In the pursuit of careers that should serve as an expression of the art with which nature endowed them, they would render to the world that service

which is required of us all, even the least gifted.

He would have shown them to us, not, I dare say, in the brilliant midday of their careers, acclaimed by all, Bruce Converse, honored by the nations that, in honoring art, do honor to themselves, Eleanor, beloved, worshiped by the multitudes she sways with her pure heavenly voice that, as Karylli said, *vient du bon Dieu;* no, I think the author would have revealed them to us rather in the bright morning of their promise which, after all, is more inspiring than the full noontime of achievement, however dazzling it may be. We may picture all that for ourselves, but who can supply for us the unobstrusive erudition, the quaint philosophical lore with which Prince Florimond would have imbued the story?

Or, it may have been that the author intended to show us Eleanor's sacrifice of public applause, finding in her art its sweetest use when employed for the one who was her love's

ideal auditor and for him alone. Perhaps, he meant eventually to answer that question which, somewhere, he complains that no other philosopher had answered: "When Love and Art stand unalterably opposed, which must be sacrificed?" I have my own opinion as to how he would have answered the perplexing problem but you must make your own deductions from what he has written.

Alas! Nothing more exists of the manuscript, except a page on which had been transcribed, apparently with much effort, some notes that, in his painstaking fashion, the author had evidently set down for future use. The notes run: "Eleanor and Bruce Converse. Their perfect happiness. The consolations of Love that outweigh Fame, Fortune or even a cherished Philosophy. Moral: Love should be held as sacred as Life, for Love is Life."

A little below this, the philosopher elaborated his ideas. "No human being, however wise,"

he writes, "can choose the complement of another being. So complex is our nature that man, after centuries of study and observation, has not grown to know mankind. Of all earth's millions, we do not comprehend one person thoroughly, not even ourself. How, then, shall we dare to direct the destinies of others? When we seek by means of our small acquirement of science to regulate the spiritual life of another, the attempt is much more likely to achieve evil than to accomplish good."

On the page is a phrase that the author probably expected to employ: "As Schopenhauer wrote in his youth of Art, Love, 'is not, like science, merely concerned with the reasoning powers, but with the innermost nature of man in which each must count merely for what he is in reality.'"

After all, there you have set forth, clearly enough, the real purpose of the book. In the guise of a prose romance, curiously interweaving fact and fiction, the gentle philosopher

had set his learning and skill to the task of proving the invincibility of Love. He wished to show the folly of meddling with the dictates of the heart, undoubtedly holding with a very modern writer that intuition is a higher force than calm and critical reasoning. "Let Love alone," is his final cry. "Profane it not by the touch of alien hands. It is too holy and too sacred to be made captive and subservient to any other ends than those for which it was given to mortals, the generation and regeneration of humanity, the union of two individuals by a tie that shall draw the whole world more closely together."

How magnificently he would have supported his theory by a picture of Eleanor and Bruce Converse, illustrating by their lives that highest phase of the passion of Love, the phase of fulfilment, of perfect understanding, of satisfaction without its "sad satiety."

That this was never done was due to the author's untimely and unexpected death. The

appended newspaper item gives the details of that sad event.

(Extract from the *Figaro* of July 7, 19..)

Nous apprenons, avec le plus vif regret, la mort du Prince Florimond de Saint-Sauveur, survenue cette nuit en son hôtel de la Rue Saint Dominique. Le Prince a succombé aux suites de la blessure qu'il a reçue dans son duel avec le Duc de Mirabelle, il y a quelques jours. Cette blessure, qui tout d'abord avait semblé légère, s'est subitement aggravée à la suite d'une sortie prématurée, faite malgré l'opposition des médecins. Appartenant à l'une des plus vieilles familles de la noblesse française, il laisse son nom s'éteindre avec lui. Il etait le fils unique du célèbre Prince Pierre de Saint-Sauveur, membre de l'Académie, Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur, etc., etc., etc.

(Translation)

With great regret we announce the death, last night at his home in the Rue Saint

Dominique, of Prince Pierre Florimond de Saint-Sauveur. His death resulted from a wound received a few days since in a duel with the Duc de Mirabelle. At first, the wound was not considered to be serious, but was aggravated by exposure, the prince having left his home too soon, against the advice of his physicians. Member of one of the oldest families of the French nobility, he was the last of his name. He was the only son of the celebrated Prince Pierre de Saint-Sauveur, member of the Academy, Commander of the Legion of Honor, etc., etc., etc.

THE END

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